



news

significant shorts

Vegetarian CJD victim raises fears of 'time bomb'

The latest victim of the fatal "new variant" Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (v-CJD) probably caught it from food infected with mad cow disease at a time when the disease was "underground" in the food supply, and 10 times less widespread than in the late Eighties. On that basis, there could be a rapid growth over the next 5-10 years in the number of v-CJD cases, with numbers rising steeply in proportion to that of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) - which grew from the first case in 1985 to a peak of 36,681 in 1992.

Roger Tomkins, whose daughter Claire, 24, is in the final stages of the incurable brain disorder, added that Britain could be "sitting on a time bomb" of v-CJD caused by eating meals infected with BSE. Ms Tomkins has been a strict vegetarian since 1985 - when the first case of BSE was identified on a farm about 25 miles from her home in Tonbridge, Kent. Her case indicates that v-CJD can have an incubation period of at least 11 years.

Professor Roy Anderson of the zoology department at the University of Oxford has studied the BSE epidemic, in which 161,000 cases have been confirmed in Britain since 1985. He calculates that 446,000 infected animals were used in the food supply to the end of 1989, when the most infectious parts of the animals - the brains and spinal cords - were hanned, and another 283,000 between 1989 and 1996.

Ms Tomkins is the 25th known v-CJD victim in Britain. In 1995 there were three deaths, in 1996 ten, and 1997 looks set to double last year's figure. If all the cases so far originate from before 1985, the next few years could see a rapid jump.

Charles Arthur

'Big Issue' wins lottery cash

The Arts Council yesterday made the first cash allocations under its £19m Arts for Everyone scheme, and left sellers of the Big Issue magazine for the homeless £125,000 better off with a grant for the Big Issue Video Training Unit to teach them film- and video making.

This was the first of four awards under the lottery-funded scheme to be made over the next two years. Acting Arts Council secretary-general, Graham Devlin, said the first phase of the scheme could not be geographically fair because applicants were chosen strictly on merit. Nottingham and Suffolk did particularly well with several major grants: Suffolk Dance won £390,000, Wingfield Arts, of mid-Suffolk, received £199,000, Nottinghamshire County Council got £399,000, and Nottingham Playhouse £500,000.

Critical pupil returns to school



A schoolgirl who was expelled for criticising her teachers but then reinstated, said yesterday she had been given an assurance that she would not be victimised. Sarah Briggs, 15 (left), was told she could return to Queen Elizabeth's Girls School at Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, when the new term starts next month. The decision was taken at a meeting of school governors, senior teachers and the family solicitor on Thursday.

Sarah was thrown out last month halfway through her GCSE course after writing to

a local newspaper claiming that pupils' work was affected by teachers' antisemitism. Headteacher Nicola Atkin demanded a written apology, but Sarah refused. She wrote a letter to Ms Atkin outlining her complaints and was expelled.

Trevor Phillips, page 15

Tube workers to ballot over strike

A London Underground strike came a step closer yesterday when the Rail, Maritime and Transport workers' union announced that it was to ballot its 5,000 station staff members on industrial action. The move by the union's national executive follows a decision by LU management to impose a 2.7 per cent pay offer which has already been rejected by RMT staff in a referendum.

Husband charged with murder

The husband of missing Sandie Bowen appeared in court yesterday charged with her murder. Forestry worker Mike Bowen, 45, was arrested and questioned for three days by detectives investigating the disappearance of Mrs Bowen. He was charged with her murder on Thursday night and remanded in custody for a week when he appeared before magistrates at Newport, Gwent. His son, Victor, 19, was also arrested but was released without charge.

Mrs Bowen, 53, a catering worker of Llandogo, Gwent, disappeared more than two weeks ago and police launched a major hunt for her. Her husband made an appeal for her to get in touch.

GCSE celebration turns to tragedy

A 16-year-old schoolboy was electrocuted while trying to cross a railway line after celebrating his exam results. The youth, who has not been named, was with a friend when he tried to cross the tracks at Sidcup station in south London on Thursday night. He slipped, landed on a live rail and died instantly. British Transport Police said yesterday. It is believed the youth, of Dartford, Kent, gained nine GCSEs. An inquest will be held.

Conscience gets better of thief

A thief with a guilty conscience has handed back computer disks loaded with the vital work of a leading cancer research scientist. The five disks were left in a private mail box outside a house in Lynton, Hampshire, and were then handed to police. The disks belong to Professor David Newell, 42, and contain vital research into new drugs for treating cancer patients. The professor, who was holidaying at Wimborne in Dorset when the disks were stolen from his car, leads a 20-strong group of scientists at the North of England Cancer Research Campaign based at Newcastle University.

people



SIMPLY THE BEST: Fiftysomething grandmother Tina Turner gets more Britons bopping than the Spice Girls, according to a new survey. Asked to name the tune that they just had to get up and dance to, more chose Tina Turner's 'The Best' than the girl group's 'Wannabe'. The Guinness Book of British Hit Singles survey of 1,200 people aged between 18 and 55 found that the Prodigy's 'Firestarter' beat 'Wannabe' into third place on the list of top ten dance floor favourites. Fourth came the Gloria Gaynor classic 'I Will Survive', followed by Abba's 'Dancing Queen'. In the chart of top ten summer songs, Cliff Richard took third place with 'Summer Holiday', behind 'Summertime' by Fresh Prince & DJ Jazzy Jeff and 'In the Summertime' by Shaggy. Number one love song was Whitney Houston's 'I Will Always Love You' while 'Orinoco Flow' by Enya was named as the best song to wind down to.

Flagship drama set to sail as Hollick saves Hornblower

Horatio Hornblower is set to sail the high seas again after the most ambitious drama project in the history of ITV has been saved by the intervention of Lord Hollick's United News & Media.

The £10m adaptation of the Hornblower books by CS Forester has been running into problems because of delays in building a replica 18th century frigate that will be the star of the Napoleonic adventure series. Filming had been due to start in the Black Sea last month but problems with the replica, indefatigable which is being built in Turkey caused United News & Media to step in.

"The boat was taking forever to build and there were fears that the whole thing would end up massively over budget," a source on the production has been reported as saying.

So far the only major role to be cast is that of Hornblower himself. For the part played by Gregory Peck in the 1951 Hollywood version, ITV has picked unknown actor Ioan Gruffudd. Actresses Kate Beckinsale and Samantha Morton have been linked with the part of Hornblower's French mistress.

In addition to the major characters United is hiring 150 extras from the Ukraine for the drama's large battle scenes.

"We always knew this was going to be a mammoth task," said Vernon Lawrence, head of United Film and TV. "But remember this is the third attempt to make Hornblower - Thames tried to do it before and so did the BBC. It is just taking a little longer than expected."

Filming will now start on 14 September but only two of the planned films can be made this year before winter seas endanger the production and the crew. The 24-gun frigate has had to be made to modern safety standards while looking as authentic as possible.

Mr Lawrence said: "It was a hugely complicated job which meant it just fell behind schedule."

The vessel is the idea of Surrey boat-builder Michael Turk and is the first hand-built wooden frigate to be built for 150 years. He used the Maritime Museum in Greenwich, south-east London to research its design.

The plan is that if the first four Hornblower films are a ratings success the boat can be used for a long-running series, thereby amortising the building costs over time. It will also be made available to tourist charters to help pay its way and is reportedly destined to be part of Greenwich's Millennium celebrations.

Paul McCann

Actor hurt in 'road-rage' fracas

The actor star Martin Shaw is considering taking legal action against a bus driver whom he claims assaulted him in a road-rage style attack.

Shaw, 51, who played Doyle in The Professionals, claims he was almost killed when the driver launched an unprovoked attack on him. He has a three-inch gash under his chin and was seeing an osteopath yesterday for treatment for bruised ribs.

Shaw was cycling to a matinee performance of Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* at the Haymarket Theatre in London's West End when he became involved in a feud with the driver of the number 52 bus near Hyde Park Corner.

The bus seemed to come straight at me then the driver threw his lunch box at me through the window. I have no idea what sparked it off. He leapt out of his



cab and came at me with fists and feet. These things happen between men from time to time - it was definitely what you call road rage."

Shaw's agent, Ann Hutton, admits he called the driver an abusive name during the incident. "He is resting at the moment because his torso is swollen with bruises. We are considering prosecuting, he has been bashed up quite badly."

A London Transport spokesman confirmed that there had been an incident involving a cyclist and a bus driver at about 2pm on Thursday.

Jail threat lifted from eco-warrior

An environmental protester dubbed "Captain Greenpeace" escaped being jailed yesterday after the oil giant BP withdrew legal action against him.

Jon Castle was one of a group of Greenpeace activists involved in the controversial occupation of a drilling rig to publicise the environmental impact of oil exploration on the Scottish coast.

Yesterday he was ordered to appear at the Court of Session in Edinburgh after BP alleged his involvement had breached an earlier court order banning him from taking such action.

The court was told that BP no longer wanted to pursue the action following its decision to abandon a £1.4m claim for damages against Greenpeace.

Richard Keen QC, for BP the parent company of Britoil plc, said: "In light of the claim for damages that has been withdrawn, it is not the intention of Britoil to insist on this complaint."

Swim star turns tables in homecoming row

Irish swimmer Michelle de Bruin last night turned the tables on the Dublin government in a row over plans to stage no official welcome for her return from the European Championships in Spain.

After stressing that she did not see the move as a snub, De Bruin - who has already won three medals at the European event to

add to the four she collected at last year's Olympic Games - invited Sports Minister Dr Jim McDaid to a reception of her own, which will be held near Dublin Airport on Monday.

Earlier Dr McDaid said he did not want to organise a ministerial airport welcome as he believed the spotlight should focus

exclusively on the multi medal-winner. Distancing his decision from drug-linked controversy that has dogged De Bruin's success, Dr McDaid said he would be "delighted" to attend the reception. "I was merely making the point that airport homecomings were not the place for politicians."

briefing

MONEY

Principles before profit as investors get ethical

The ethical investment sector is booming, despite being written off as a hippy-type fad just a few years ago.

New figures indicate that growing numbers of people are becoming more choosy about where their money is invested and do not want it supporting activities they oppose such as animal testing or weapons production.

The amount of money invested in ethical unit trusts and investment trusts has more than doubled in the last three years, according to the figures from the Ethical Investment Research Service (EIRIS). In comparison, total funds managed by all UK unit and investment trusts have grown by only 55 per cent.

Ethical investment is defined as choosing investments according to your values and beliefs. Many ethical investors steer clear of companies which, for example, are involved in pesticides, animal testing or nuclear power.

EIRIS says many people with pension plans or endowment mortgages may be indirectly supporting an activity they are opposed to.

The first ethical fund was set up in 1984 and there are now more than 40. Many of them actively seek out environmentally-friendly companies. In June this year the total amount managed by ethical funds was £1.465bn compared with £672m in July 1994.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Shops flouting cigarettes ban

Attempts to catch out tobacconists who sell cigarettes to children by sending youngsters into shops to attempt to make a purchase may be a waste of time, research suggested yesterday.

Surveys of two schools in Gateshead, Tyne and Wear, revealed that large numbers of children under the legal age limit of 16 were buying cigarettes from local shops, with only a small percentage being turned away. But test sales carried out by the local trading standards office - in which a child is recruited to try to buy cigarettes - gave no indication of a problem. Not a single test purchase was made and hence there were no prosecutions.

The surveys, led by paediatrician Dr Mark Bagott from

Newcastle University, were conducted at two schools in May 1995 and May 1996. At the first school 39 per cent of girls aged 14 to 15 and 26 per cent of boys were regular smokers. At the second, the figures were 24 per cent of girls and 14 per cent of boys.

A total of 95 per cent of children who regularly smoked bought cigarettes from shops at least once a week. Only 2.5 per cent in 1995 and 6 per cent in 1996 reported ever having had someone refuse to sell them cigarettes. The findings are reported in yesterday's *British Medical Journal*.



SOCIAL SERVICES

Adoption procedures criticised

Local authorities are providing a poor quality adoption service, a report revealed yesterday.

Inspections of seven local authorities by the Social Services Inspectorate found the adoption process is littered with avoidable delays, poor management and monitoring. The report - *For Children's Sake Part II: An Inspection of Local Authority Post Placement and Post-Adoption Services* - documents the radical changes in the needs of children placed for adoption over the last decade.

The agency's chief inspector, Sir Herbert Laming, said adoption services must be improved so that adopted children and adults get the service they deserve.

"The findings of recent inspections in seven local authorities raise questions about whether social services departments are responding to the challenges presented by adoption."

Delays in the adoption process, post-adoption support for adoptive and birth families, services for adopted adults, and a lack of commitment to inter-country adoption are the key issues which need to be addressed, he said.

Paul Boateng, Under-Secretary of State for Health, said the findings of the report must be addressed as a matter of urgency.

SHOPPING

Heatwave fuels fan sales

The recent humid weather has made fans a hot item for Britain's major electrical retailers said today.

John Lewis said its total sales were 7 per cent up last week compared with the same week a year ago, despite the temperatures making for "less than ideal" shopping conditions. Brian O'Callaghan, director of trading, said: "The remarkable number of fan sales recorded had much to do with a sparkling electrical performance."

A spokeswoman for Comet, the high street electrical chain, said sales had doubled in the last couple of weeks although she could not give figures. Dixons, which owns Currys as well as its own brand stores, said sales of fans were rising. "It is clearly down to the hot weather," said a group spokesman.

John Lewis said the hot weather had also benefited sales of garden furniture, sales of which rose by 66 per cent and gardening items, where sales were up 40 per cent.

FOOD

What sandwiches say about you

Women prefer prawns - that was the clear message that emerged yesterday from a survey of lunchtime sandwich-eating habits.

Four hundred and fifty young working women took part in the survey by Bread for Life - a campaign encouraging people to eat more bread as part of a healthy balanced diet - and one in five chose prawn on wheat germ bread as their favourite. Donna Dawson, a psychologist, feels this choice reflects an independent high flier with an interest in health and fitness.

The brawn booty came a close second with 19 per cent of votes, revealing a traditional, romantic, sociable and home-loving woman. Egg salad on brown bread also pulled in 19 per cent of votes indicating a confident but cautious personality type.



NEWSPAPERS SUPPORT RECYCLING
Recycled paper made up 43.6% of the raw material for UK newspapers in 1996

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سكزا من الاربعين

Hypnosis reveals backpacker's killer

Eric Silver
Jerusalem
and Jojo Moyes

A retired Israeli army officer confessed yesterday to the murder of British backpacker Max Hunter, as the law graduate's seriously injured girlfriend prepared for an emotional meeting with his parents.

Daniel Okef, a 45-year-old retired major, shot Mr Hunter, 22, and wounded Charlotte Gibb, 20, after giving them a lift from the Red Sea resort of Eilat 10 nights ago. He was arrested

at his home near Tel Aviv early yesterday after an intensive manhunt by a team of about 100 detectives, undercover officers and forensic scientists.

Mr Okef, who is married with two children, was remanded in custody for 15 days by a Beer-sheba magistrate. When the police picked him up, he said: "I was expecting you."

A police spokesman said Mr Okef, who works for a private transport company, could not explain why he had shot Mr Hunter. Police praised Miss Gibb for her courage, after she

was hypnotised to provide details of the murder. News of his arrest came as she prepared for a visit from Mr Hunter's parents - their first meeting since the attack - at Addenbrooke's Hospital, Cambridge, where she is recovering.

"She is quite prepared for the meeting," said David Adlam, an oral and maxillofacial consultant. "I think if anything she is more concerned for them than she is for herself."

Mr Adlam talked in detail yesterday for the first time about Miss Gibb's injuries and her "million-to-one" escape. He said the bullet which went through her face had amazingly done very little damage.

"I think it's fair to say it's a miracle really. The bullet managed to miss every vital nerve in her face," he said. "Had the trajectory been altered by millimetres it would have gone straight into her brain and killed her. I think it must be a million-to-one chance."

Mad dogs and Morris Men set out on holiday

Lucy McDonald and Louise Hancock

Hopes that the hot spell would continue for the bank holiday were fading yesterday with a more traditional damp holiday weekend forecast.

Despite the break in the recent heatwave, 3 million undaunted holidaymakers flocked to the coast amid predictions of chaos on the roads.

In the Peak District, the Saddleworth Morris Dancers have been collecting rushes ahead of a break in the weather in a ceremony that revives a tradition that ran up against church authority early in the last century.

In a tradition dating back to druidical times, two tons of rushes are collected each August, loaded on to a rush cart and taken to the parish church of St Chad in Saddleworth, to spread on its floor - originally to form a compost to warm the church through the winter.

In the early 19th century a local bishop objected to the church being used like a cattle shed and rush spreading in the church was reportedly abandoned. A rush cart was last pulled in anger in Saddleworth in 1921, but the ceremony was revived when the Morris men built a new cart.

Traffic on some of Britain's principal routes was moving at the speed of a rush cart yesterday afternoon, as holidaymakers set off early in an attempt to beat the jams.

The RAC reported seven mile northbound tailbacks on the A34 at Newbury. By mid-afternoon the M5/M6 link near Birmingham was practically at a standstill.

An AA spokeswoman confirmed: "We'd expect this area to be busy late afternoon on a Friday, but these jams have started to build about two hours earlier than normal - and it's clearly going to get a lot worse."

Steve Upsher, of the AA, said: "It's the last bank holiday before Christmas, people tend to make their plans well in advance and want to make the most of their free time whatever the weather."

The RAC cited the M4 and M5 in the West Country, and the M6 up to the Lake District as well as all routes out of London, as likely traffic hot spots.

With up to 5 million extra vehicles anticipated on the roads this weekend, the AA expects up to 45,000 call-outs.

As the dash to the coast and countryside began, holidaymakers were warned by the British Heart Foundation to take care over the weekend.

A spokesman said: "The combination of travel, hot weather and air pollution could spell a health risk for some. Travel makes people frazzled, and humid weather seems to make them less tolerant."

Although the weekend weather is unlikely to match the recent high temperatures, Martin Rouley, of the Meteorological Office, predicted "that despite a low risk of rain over much of the UK, with the South-east likely to experience the heaviest showers, there will be sunny periods and temperatures could reach as high as 25C."

Nevertheless, some holidaymakers are taking no chances with the notoriously fickle British weather, as record numbers went abroad. Heathrow and Gatwick were anticipating a combined total of more than a million passengers as Britons head for European destinations such as Corfu and Malaga, where temperatures are expected to reach 30C.

With the bookmakers offering odds of 4/6 that London, Glasgow or Cardiff will see rain during the bank holiday, Graham Sharpe, of William Hill, had to admit: "If there is one certainty you can always bet on, it is that bank holiday weather will be unpredictable."



Take to the hills: Aaron Daniels (centre) and fellow Saddleworth Morris Men collect rushes to be spread on the floor of the parish church tomorrow

Photographer: Carl Royle

Comics plead for BBC subscription to replace licence



Programmed for success: *Birds of a Feather*, one of the comic creations of Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran who attacked their BBC bosses in the MacLaggart Memorial Lecture

Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

The BBC licence fee should be replaced with a voluntary subscription of £10 a month so that the creative talent in television can be paid what they are worth, the television industry was told last night.

The comedy writers Laurence Marks and Maurice Gran made a wide-ranging attack on broadcasting bosses in the annual MacLaggart Memorial Lecture at the Edinburgh International Television Festival. They argued that the only solution to an industry where writers are undervalued and have no creative control was to pump more money into the system by charging a realistic price for the BBC.

"In 1995/96 the average person spent nearly 24 hours a week watching television, nearly half his or her free time," said Laurence Marks. "This average person spends about 10 hours of his 24 watching the BBC. For those 10 hours of entertainment,

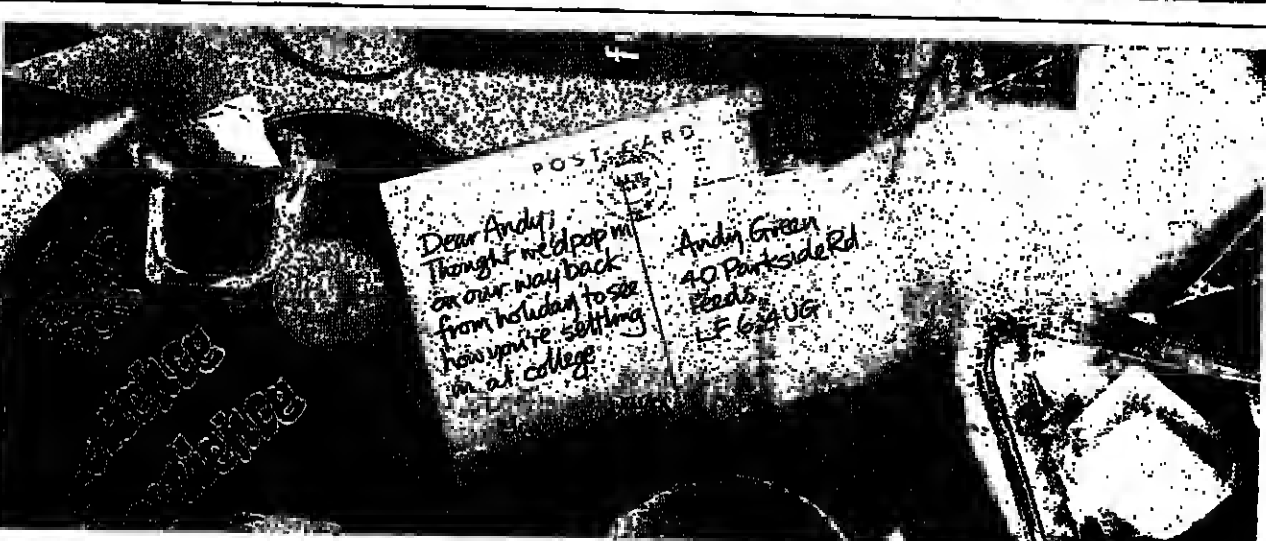
information, news, sport, drama and Noel Edmonds he pays, according to the BBC's own figures, about 50p per week. "Less than the price of a couple of tabloids, a quarter of a video rental...even the Radio Times costs 75p," he said.

Marks and Gran, writers of *Birds of a Feather* and *Shine On Harvey Moon* claimed that the undercharging for programmes meant the money and power in television is not distributed to the people responsible for actually making it: the writing talent.

The pair made scathing attacks on all three of the terrestrial networks: "The broadcasters take us all for granted. The creative talent, writers and producers who actually make television. They prefer to concentrate their cash, care and chauffeur-driven cars for the front-of-camera talent - soap stars, celebrity chefs and Hale and Pace," said Mr Marks.

"At ITV they want more of the same in drama, and dumber, cheaper people shows in place of scripted light entertainment and intelligent documentaries."

But the BBC was the main focus of their attack: "The creative leaders within the BBC have been marginalised. The power that the creative staff once had has been usurped by legions of lawyers, accountants, business affairs executives and policy unit apparatchiks.



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THE INDEPENDENT

سكزا من الاصل

Your money, or the pet gets microwaved

Ian Burrell

Everyone knows the urban myth about the absent-minded old lady who put her poodle in the microwave in a misguided attempt to dry it out.

But the myth is being turned into reality in a sickening criminal trend adopted by robbers and thugs to intimidate their victims.

For purposes of blackmail or revenge, pets are being forced into microwaves, before the

eyes of their frightened owners. If the owners are switched on the animals are cooked from the inside with a blast of short electromagnetic waves.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Animals said last night that it was appalled that people were prepared to subject pets to such torture and would be seeking prison sentences for those found culpable.

Scotland Yard said yesterday it was looking for a gang who seized a couple's cat and put it

in the microwave after forcing their way into their home in St John's Wood, north London.

The thieves threatened to cook the cat unless the couple gave them the combination to their safe and later escaped with antique jewellery, watches and other goods worth £18,500.

The three robbers struck at the husband, 53, parked his car at home after watching a football match at Arsenal.

They demanded the man's Rolex watch, before punching

him in the face and forcing him into the house, where they threatened to cut his 46-year-old wife's throat and kill the couple's cat.

The raiders then took the woman's Cartier watch before searching the house and using the cat as a blackmailing tool. When the safe was opened the cat was released unharmed.

But a worse fate befell Jasper, a kitten, who was forced into a microwave by a man whose advances to the animal's

owner had been spurned at a party.

Brendan Blennerhassett, 24, was jailed for six months this week at a court in County Durham after being found guilty of deliberately killing the 12-week-old kitten.

A court heard that he had carried out the attack after Jasper's owner, who he had earlier met at a nightclub, rejected him at a party later the same evening.

Vicky Allen, 20, had brought

her kitten to the party, so that it would not be left alone at home. Ms Allen cried as she told the court that she had tried to save the stricken animal: "I took it out and tried to revive it but it died."

Ann Morris, chairwoman of the hench in Houghton-le-Spring, Co Durham, said: "The torture and death of a much loved and defenceless 12-week-old kitten is a thoroughly despicable offence."

By a strange twist of fate, the

microwave was invented to meet a need to heat hamsters humanely in 1950s laboratories.

James Lovelock and other scientists developed the technology while working on experiments concerned with the preservation of living tissue.

Hamsters which had been subjected to a pooling process needed to be revived through warmth without burning their skins.

Since then, partly thanks to the spread of urban myth, the

image of the pet in the microwave has become the source of dubious humour. The comedians Hale and Pace made their names through the controversy which followed an infamous sketch depicting a cat being microwaved.

The RSPCA has looked on in horror as a new form of pet torture has evolved in British homes. It has on its books a case where a 13-year-old boy killed the family whippet in the microwave for "fun".

Gold card becomes the new designer accessory

Nic Cicutti
Personal Finance Editor

There is always one in any crowd. The woman who took the plunge and finally bought brown, just as the others went for charcoal grey. The guy who got into flares, when everyone switched to straight-leg trousers, and back again.

American Express, the world's largest card company, yesterday performed a similar stunt in the financial services world, as it finally launched a gold credit card—years after the opposition cleaned up in the same market.

The new launch comes four years after an explosion in the gold sector, with the number of cards tripling from 800,000 in 1993 to well over 2.5 million today.

Saturation levels in the standard card market have led many banks to launch gold options with the aim of capitalising on higher spenders—who deliver greater profits to their issuers.

Among the 20-plus issuers to have stolen a march on American Express in the past few years is the tiny Leek United Building Society.

Pauline Rocssler, marketing

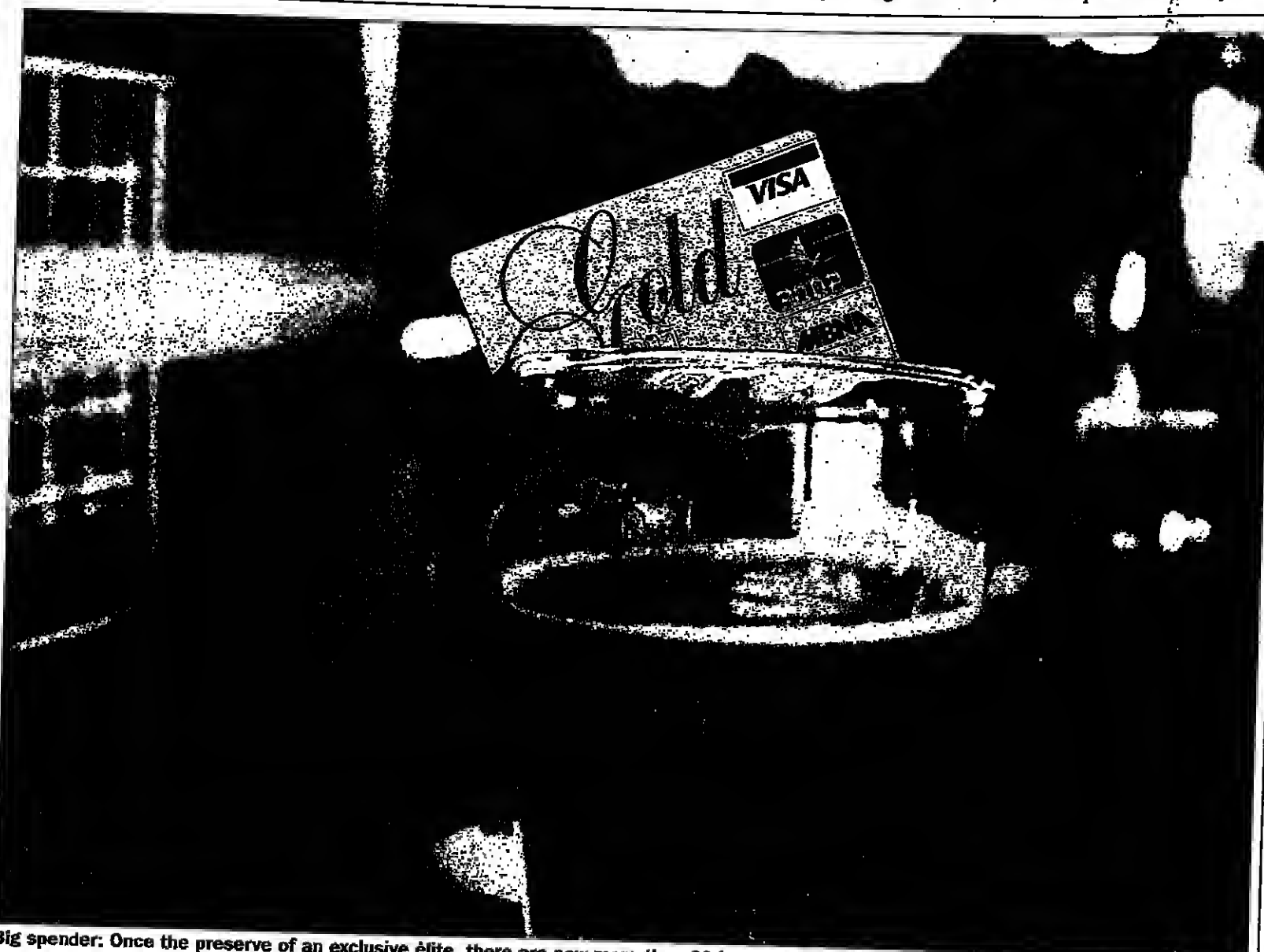
manager at the Leek, 26th in the league table of UK societies, said: "We have always argued that small is beautiful. When we want a decision we don't need to go to 700 separate committees to get it."

Ms Rocssler declined to give an actual number of Leek United Gold Cards issued, but said they were a "reasonable" proportion of the society's 75,000 members.

Overshadowing the epic commercial tussle between Leek United and American Express is the more significant question of whether gold cards, once the preserve of an exclusive elite, are now the vulgar playthings of a far wider segment of the population.

An American Express spokeswoman yesterday denied any such suggestion: "Our research shows that holding a gold card is rated on a par with owning a sports car or over and above having a fax machine or even going on a skiing holiday. "Only one in 10 people have a gold card even today and you will find that these people still see them as aspirational things to have."

The card company's seeming reluctance to enter the gold market was based on the fact



Big spender: Once the preserve of an exclusive elite, there are now more than 20 issuers of gold cards

Photograph: John Lawrence

that although Amex is famous for its charge cards—where you must settle your bill each month—it only launched its first standard credit card two years ago. However, the spokeswoman added: "What people are looking for is the right brand. When people were asked what card issuer they associate with gold, they immediately said American Express."

Richard Spencer, manager of the plastic cards department at

Datamonitor, the research company, said: "Over the last few years, the market for gold cards has changed from a high prestige upper-class thing to something aimed simply at higher spenders. "Some people may

feel that there has been a bit of tarnishing of the exclusivity tag. But the card issuers themselves, who stand to make a lot of money from gold cards, won't really care."

Seekers of the ultimate cred-

it card to impress friends and family may not feel the same way. The new metal to aim for—you got it here first—is platinum.

Going for Gold—
The Long Weekend, p21

Kites return to city prey

Stephen Goodwin

Once extinct in England and Scotland, the spectacular red kite, a bird of prey with a 5ft wing span, could soon become a familiar sight in places as urban and unromantic as Wolverhampton or Derby.

This summer, red kites have bred in the Midlands for the first time in more than 100 years.

Despite continued persecution by landowners and egg thieves, 48 pairs of red kites bred successfully in England this year, rearing 105 young.

Most were in southern England, where the scavenging bird was reintroduced in 1989. But it is the breakthrough in the Midlands that has most excited conservationists.

Kites were introduced there in 1995 and of four pairs which attempted to breed this year, three were successful, raising eight young. One pair reared four young.

While the red kites have so far kept to the countryside, that could change if the birds continue to increase in numbers. Unlike many birds of prey, notably the golden eagle, it is by no means reclusive. In medieval times, kites scavenged the streets of London.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds does not expect such a comeback, but experts believe it could become a common sight over towns and cities.

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The life and times of a Mean Fiddler: from junk dealer to the stock market

Vince Power is the UK's biggest music promoter. Now he wants the world

Alexandra Williams

London's king of rock'n'roll is aiming to be the king of stocks and shares.

He looked like any other middle-aged festival-goer at the Reading Festival yesterday, but Vince Power, head of the Mean Fiddler organisation, was commanding operations, and he managed to slip in a quick announcement of a plan to float his empire on the stock market.

The portly Irishman, whose company is the UK's biggest promoter of live music, is planning to expand overseas and is looking to the stock market to raise capital.

"We've just finalised our plan to float on the market in the hope of raising some capital to expand quicker. The Mean Fiddler has been expanding at maybe a rate of three, four places a year but we have such a good brand now, we want to expand more quickly."

"We need to go to the market with what we've got - hopefully by November," he said.

Power is the capital's undisputed king of rock'n'roll, owning a third of the city's major rock and jazz venues. He was responsible for luring the Sex Pistols out of retirement last year and plunking them in Finsbury Park to the delight of 30,000 ageing punk rockers. At the other end of musical spectrum, he has promoted Van Morrison and Roy Orbison.

He stages four of the six big summer festivals and in June launched the American version of his Fleadh Irish music bash.

In 1989, Power rescued the Reading Festival from bankruptcy and made it profitable, turning it into the most important festival after Glastonbury. Yesterday, the first day of the three-day festival, more than 45,000 people converged on Reading.

The economic benefits of



Taking charge: Vince Power at Reading yesterday and (below) two of the artists he has promoted over the years, Van Morrison and Roy Orbison. Main photograph: Andrew Buerman

the festival for the town run into six figures. Festivals are a lucrative part of Power's business too, providing nearly half Mean Fiddler's pre-tax profits of £411,383 and £15m turnover in the 18 months to 31 December 1995. Last year there was a turnover of £25m.

The main band headlining the festival last night was the five-man group Suede, who have just released the single "Film Star".

The line-up for the weekend includes Cast, James, Kenickie, Manic Street Preachers, The Eels, Metallica and The Verve. And Reading's home-grown bands are also well represented. Bennett, who charted with "Mum Has Gone To Iceland",



take to the stage on Sunday.

Born in 1947, in Waterford in Ireland, Power moved to Hemel Hempstead when he 17 and began building up a second-hand furniture business in north

London. He started his first venue, Harlesden's Mean Fiddler, as a hobby in 1982.

"I snapped up a property in Harlesden for £125,000 and turned it into a Nashville-style



venue with cool beer and hot music," he said.

"I was into country and Irish traditional music but it hadn't enough pulling power so I booked The Pogues, Los Lobos,

Lone Justice etcetera. And it worked. In 1988, I got involved in the Reading Festival. I checked out similar events in Europe, staged indie music and it was an instant hit."

A far cry from his days as a furniture dealer - or not?

"If you book the right band, you won't have much trouble getting the customers in. And if you chose the right furniture, you won't have much problem selling it. There are similarities," he said.

He plans to float the company, which is expected to run Fleadhs in New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, Toronto and Melbourne next year, in order to escalate the expansion.

"I started off as a one-man band but I think I need some help now. I think it's a new era for the Mean Fiddler - it's a new time and I think, in the long term, it will be very good for us," he said.

Life for rapist who struck again

Louise Jury

A rapist who attacked a young teacher only three months after being freed from a 14-year prison sentence for another sex offence was sentenced to life yesterday as probation officers revealed that they knew he would strike again.

Christopher Clark, 46, pounced on the woman, placed a plastic bag over her head and indecently assaulted her yards from a ball hostel in Bath where he was being held on probation.

As Clark began his life sentence, probation officers said they had been "waiting for something to happen" as soon as he was freed after serving nine years of the 14-year term.

But they were helpless to prevent his release because his original sentence for rape was handed down before the 1991 Criminal Justice Act made it possible to keep offenders inside if they are still considered a risk to society.

Members of Clark's family revealed that they had pleaded with the authorities to prevent his release. And Don Foster, the Liberal Democrat MP for Bath, said the law should be tightened to prevent other dangerous offenders sentenced before 1991 being released.

Gary Redfern, Avon Probation Service's assistant chief officer, said: "There was nothing we could do and we were simply waiting for something to happen - we considered him to be dangerous. His offending had not been addressed and he had not changed. We knew Christopher Clark as a risk."

Mr Redfern defended the service which he said had been unfairly criticised in the case. Clark was considered too dangerous to be released on parole, but, under the rules operating at the time, was entitled to remission. He had been ordered to take the drug Goserelin to destroy his sex drive.

Clark, who was nicknamed the "early bird rapist" following a string of knife-point sex attacks on women in the 1980s, had denied attacking the 23-year-old teacher.

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Private pupils do twice as well at A-level



Top of the A-list: Winchester College pupils achieved an average of more than 3 As at A-level each

Photograph: Jon Gilbride

Judith Judd
Education Editor

The proportion of grade As scored by independent school candidates at A-level has climbed to twice the national average, according to figures published yesterday.

But provisional A-level results for 528 fee-paying schools show a wide range of performance in private schools with around half doing less well than the top three comprehensives listed in last week's Independent survey.

The top school this year was Winchester College, (boarding fees nearly £14,000 a year) which supplanted St Paul's School in London, last year's winner. Winchester's pupils scored an average of 31.7 points — equivalent to more than three A grades per pupil.

Under the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (Ucas) scoring system an A gains 10 points and an E gains two.

The figures show that overall 31.7 per cent of independent school entries were given grade

The top thirty

School name	Points
Winchester College	31.7
Westminster School	31.5
St Paul's School, London	31.4
The North London Collegiate School	31.3
Bedford School	31.2
St Paul's School, London	31.1
St Paul's School, London	31.0
St Paul's School, London	30.9
St Paul's School, London	30.8
St Paul's School, London	30.7
St Paul's School, London	30.6
St Paul's School, London	30.5
St Paul's School, London	30.4
St Paul's School, London	30.3
St Paul's School, London	30.2
St Paul's School, London	30.1
St Paul's School, London	30.0
St Paul's School, London	29.9
St Paul's School, London	29.8
St Paul's School, London	29.7
St Paul's School, London	29.6
St Paul's School, London	29.5
St Paul's School, London	29.4
St Paul's School, London	29.3
St Paul's School, London	29.2
St Paul's School, London	29.1
St Paul's School, London	29.0

A, up from 31.4 to 31.7 per cent. The national average remains unchanged at 16 per cent.

Some well-known public schools such as Gordonstoun (16.3 points) where the Prince of Wales was educated and Bedales, the progressive co-educational school, (21.1 points) came below the top comprehensive in the Independent survey, Chase High School, Malvern (22.1 points).

Dick Davison, spokesman for the Independent Schools Information Service, which supplied yesterday's figures, said that the wide range of scores reflected schools' different admissions policies. "Those with the most spectacular A-level results are highly selective. There

are lots of other kinds of independent schools, some of which will never appear in the top half of any league table."

James Sabben-Clare, head of Winchester, was modest about the school's achievement. "If there have to be league tables we don't mind coming top but they can be very misleading. We devote a lot of time to non-exam work. The fact that we are top gives people no idea what the atmosphere here is like."

"St Francis Xavier's College in Liverpool, said yesterday that since 1988 several of its pupils had achieved 13 grade As at GCSE, one with 11 stars. Yesterday the Independent reported that two Gateshead boys had been awarded 13 A grades.

Too much spent on top security jails

Ian Burrell

Too much money is being poured into a handful of high-security prisons leading to the "impoverishment" of the rest of the country's jails, according to the Chief Inspector of Prisons.

Sir David Ramsbotham said the regimes at ordinary local prisons were being "decimated" to pay for the upgrading of security at the six high-security "dispersal" jails.

He questioned whether all the £150m worth of improvements recommended by Sir John Woodcock's report into the 1994 Whitemoor jail break by six high-security inmates, including five IRA men, had proved value for money.

His criticisms yesterday were included in a report on one of the dispersal prisons, Full Sutton in York, which was the scene of serious rioting earlier this year. The other dispersal jails are Whitemoor in Cambridgeshire, Long Lartin in Worcestershire, Frankland near Durham, Belmarsh in south-east London and Wakefield, West Yorkshire.

Sir David said that staff at Full Sutton's Special Secure Unit, a maximum security "prison-within-a-prison", was being "mothballed" following a downgrading of the security status of the IRA prisoners held there.

Sir David, who completed his report before the announcement, said that he was concerned about the conditions

inside the special units. "Their claustrophobic atmosphere affects staff as well as prisoners, and they must be looked after as well," he said.

He added that he believed there was scope for cuts in the budget at Full Sutton, and that he had found a "very marked" contrast between conditions and resources available at the dispersal jails compared with the rest of the prison estate.

"It has been described as 'them and us' and it feels like it," Sir David said. "I cannot argue with the need to maintain security, particularly in high-security prisons, but I wonder if the Woodcock improvements, as implemented at Full Sutton, represent real value for money in contrast with the impoverishment one finds elsewhere."

"That in the order of an additional £2m per year is needed to pay the extra staff costs must not only be the envy of other governors who see their regimes decimated, but must suggest that a balance needs to be struck in the context of the prison budget as a whole."

Sir David said that staff at Full Sutton were now clearly in control of the prison after the serious rioting earlier this year caused damage set at hundreds of thousands of pounds.

However, he warned that the way prisoners' complaints were being treated by in a cavalier way by some officers suggested that some complacency could be creeping in.

Appeal allowed on girl inmates

Louise Jury

The Home Office was yesterday given leave to appeal against the High Court ruling outlawing the practice of holding young women offenders with adult prisoners.

But the judges who made the judgment on Tuesday said yesterday that they considered it "difficult to find any argument" for allowing young offenders to mix with adult criminals.

About 80 young women are held in adult prisons instead of young offender institutions because there are only eight women jails with such units, creating travelling difficulties.

But the ruling is also believed to apply to the much larger population of 1,500 young male offenders also held in adult jails. Complying will create a logistical nightmare for the already over-stressed prison system.

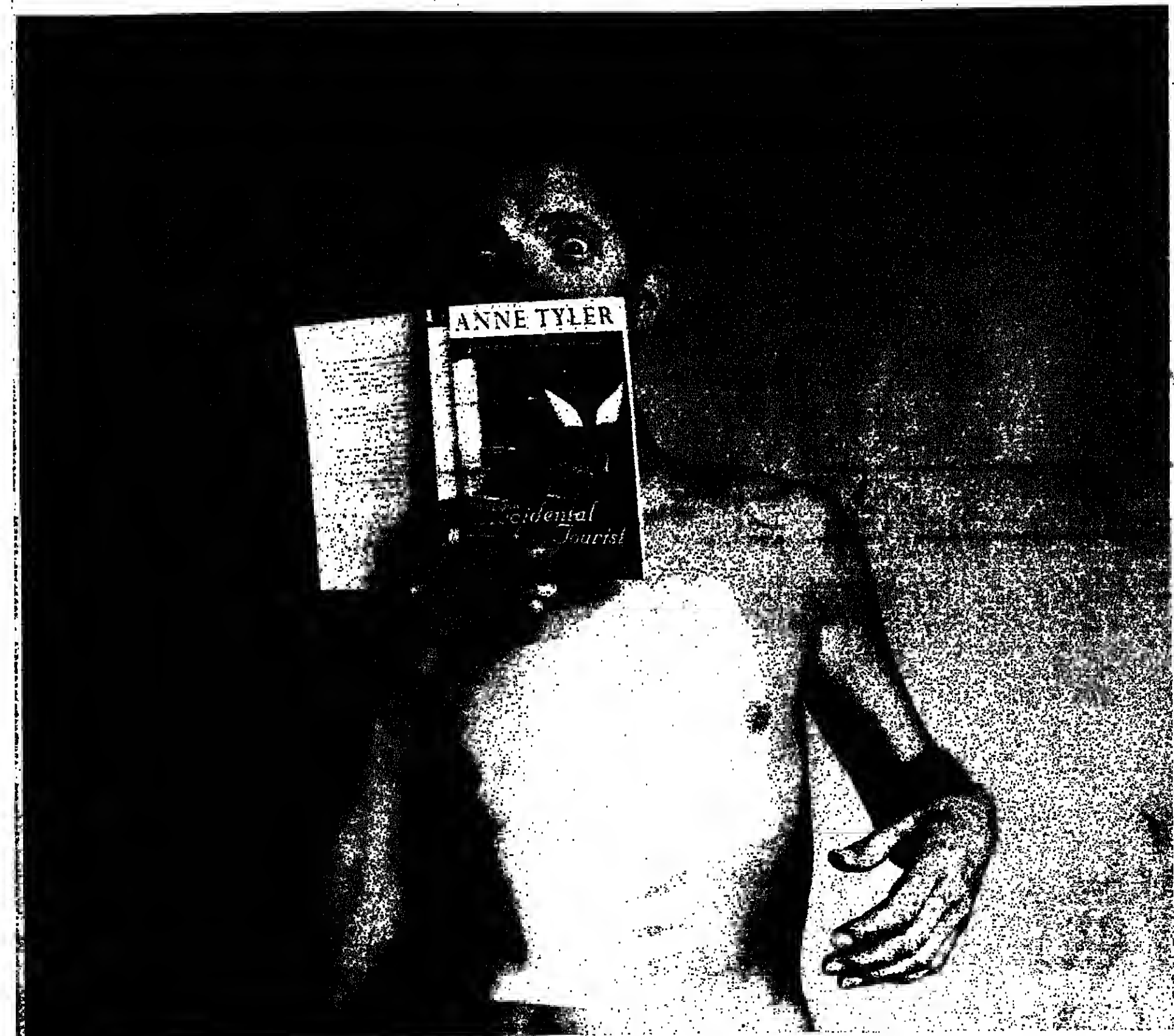
The Prison Service was yesterday arranging to designate more prison accommodation as young offender institutions, but said that would inevitably in-

crease the pressure on the adult system. The details of the judgment were released yesterday. It enforces a section of the 1982 Criminal Justice Act which states that offenders under-21 who are sentenced to detention in a young offender institution must be sent to one.

There is a power to detain in prison in individual cases, but Mr Justice Sedley and Mr Justice Anstall held that the Home Office was acting unlawfully in using this power as a blanket policy covering all young women. In practice, young women have been automatically sent to adult jails pending removal to young offender units.

Leave to appeal was granted after Robin Tann, for the Home Office, said the case was "of considerable importance."

The young woman at the centre of the case, a 16-year-old known as F, spent 15 days in Risley jail, Cheshire, but has now been found a place at Styl women's prison in Cheshire which has a young offender unit.



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Blairs look a gift horse in the mouth after lunch with Lionel

Joanna Lee
Paris

Europe's two newest left-wing leaders had lunch together yesterday in the village of Saint-Martin d'Oydes, in the beautiful Ariège region in south-west France. Tony Blair has been on holiday there with his family and the French Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, who was visiting his constituency of Castagnère, 20 miles away, drove over for lunch with his wife Sylviane.

The atmosphere was casual. Mr Blair, who has received a royal welcome here since his arrival, looked relaxed in his holiday attire of a shirt and summer trousers. Neither man wore a tie as they strolled through the village, swarmed by journalists and television cameras. Most of the 200 inhabitants of the village were also there to welcome them.

The leaders had a glass of champagne with the proud and elated mayor in the village square, where the villagers presented Mr Blair's three children with a young pony called Justin.

However, the children will not be bringing the pony - of the Pyrenees Merens breed - home with them. A Downing Street spokesman said: "The gift was very much appreciated, but the Blairs will leave the horse with a local family who also have children who are able to ride it."

He was unable to say whether the animal was given to the French family to keep or for safekeeping until the Blairs are

able to visit it again. It is thought the Blairs may have been concerned about finding adequate stabling for it in the Downing Street area.

As they walked back to the Blair holiday home for lunch, they discussed in French Mr Jospin's budget for 1998. Speaking to journalists, Mr Jospin commented on Mr Blair's youth, and the leaders said that Europe was on the lunch menu, "along with some relaxing chat".

Officials at Mr Jospin's office have been keen to underline the private nature of the lunch. A spokesman from the Matignon said: "We have no idea what the two men will discuss."

However, relaxed the meeting was, it is the first time the two leaders have met on a one-to-one basis and both were keen to see what common ground they have, particularly on Europe.

It is likely that the French leader will have tried to gain the support of his British counterpart on jobs in Europe, which will be discussed at the EU employment summit in November. Mr Jospin lobbied for this summit at the inter-governmental conference in Amsterdam in June, emphasising the importance of a "social Europe" and rejecting an EU based solely on economic issues.

Social concerns in Europe have not dampened the French government's enthusiasm for the single currency and Mr Jospin will have been keen to find out exactly where the

British stand before he meets Chancellor Helmut Kohl next week. The French Finance Minister, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, is adamant the single currency will go ahead in 1999. The meeting was also no doubt an effort to dispel the rumours that the pair do not very often see eye to eye. Mr Jospin said: "We have different traditions, but we have common values and we are both socialists."



Horse play: Tony and Cherie Blair with Justin, a local Pyrenean pony, a gift from the people of Saint Martin d'Oydes, where the family are holidaying. The Prime Minister met his French counterpart, Lionel Jospin, for an informal lunch yesterday. Photograph: AP

'The pony was much appreciated, but it will be left with a local family's children'

Military warn over Bosnian Serb split

Christopher Bellamy
Defence Correspondent

Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic has won the first round of her battle with supporters of Radovan Karadzic, but she has a hard struggle ahead which could still split the Bosnian Serb mini-state in two, geographically as well as politically.

Yesterday, the Bosnian Serb military staff based in Bijeljina warned Ms Plavsic that it would move against her to prevent the

Republic of Srpska splitting in two. Ms Plavsic yesterday appeared to have wrested control of the Banja Luka police from officers loyal to Mr Karadzic and the UN has started re-training

Bosnian Serb policemen in Banja Luka to create a "non-political" police force as part of efforts to defuse conflict within the Serb community and to consolidate a peaceful, democratic society. But the Bosnian Serb military remains an obstacle.

The Republic of Srpska comprises two lobes connected by the narrow Pribina corridor running past Banja in the north. The political division reflects the geographical split. Banja Luka, a large city in the north-west, is one of two main power centres in the Serb "entity" within Bosnia. The other is Pale in the east, the official capital, a former ski resort outside Sarajevo. Banja Luka is Ms Plavsic's power base, and its politics have traditionally been more moderate in contrast to Pale, where Milorad Krapinski, the Serb representative on the three-man Bosnian presidency, Mr Karadzic and General Ratko Mladic are based.

A civil war between Serbs would probably split the Bosnian Serb republic on those lines, weakening it, inviting the Muslims to push north through the Posavina corridor - which was almost cut during the 1992-95 civil war - making it easier for Muslim and Croat refugees to return home and for Nato

troops to seize Mr Karadzic and General Mladic, who are wanted for war crimes.

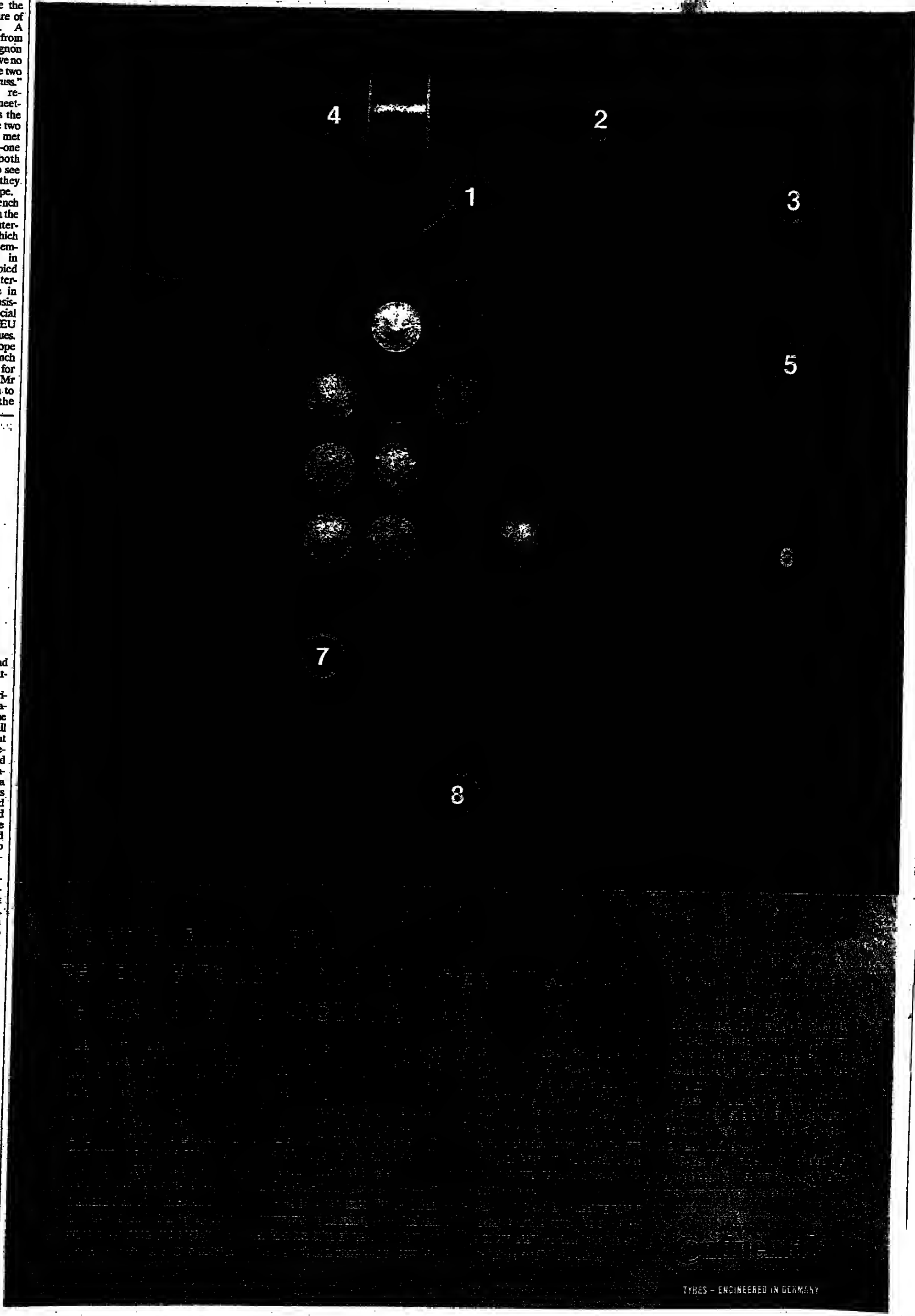
"If individual actors in the crisis should continue to destabilise and destroy the state, the army of the Serb Republic shall no longer tolerate and warn but shall undertake measures to defend integrity, sovereignty and constitutional order," the Bosnian Serb general staff said in a statement released in Pale. It was clearly aimed at Ms Plavsic, and noted that the military had warned her last month that the international community could exploit the internal dispute to weaken the Bosnian Serb "republic".

Ms Plavsic seems to be winning control of the police, leaving the military as the last bastion of pro-Karadzic forces.

On Wednesday, 350 British and Czech troops swooped to disarm pro-Karadzic police in Banja Luka who were believed to be plotting a coup against Ms Plavsic. The international stabilisation force - S-For - reduced its active presence on the streets of Banja Luka to 250 on Thursday. Yesterday they were hoping to reduce it further although extra troops will remain on patrol until the International Police Task Force has completed investigations into alleged human rights abuses by police.

Serbian policemen who were to serve in the new force are being vetted to check they have no criminal record or outstanding allegations of human rights abuses against them. In practice, they are being asked to sign a pledge of loyalty to Ms Plavsic. International officials said many police were responding throughout the region.

"Plavsic has made a gaping hole in the police network and the army has refused to get involved while tacitly supporting Plavsic," a diplomatic source said last night. If the Karadzic faction is putting its faith in the Bosnian Serb military, its position is looking increasingly desperate.



international

British bobby takes the heat out of explosive situation

Phil Davison on Montserrat

Salem - In all his years with the Sussex police, or on his native Isle of Wight, Chief Superintendent Frank Hooper had never seen anything like this. An anti-British riot, fists and batons swinging, shotguns and tear gas launchers loaded, Guinness bottles flying, high and angry Rastafarian youths demanding to see the Queen.

But the 51-year-old Montserrat police commissioner, every inch an English copper, handled it with aplomb.

He looks more like Michael Palin than Wyatt Earp and he was armed only with a walkie-talkie, but he walked into the rioters and single-handedly defused an ugly situation. It had threatened to produce bodies and turn into a national revolt on this volcano-battered island, but in the end everybody held hands and went home.

The first violent anti-British riot ever seen on the British Caribbean colony began shortly before four pm on Thursday afternoon. Within direct sight of the Soufriere Hills volcano that has changed Montserratians' lives, a couple of dozen Rastafarian youths assembled outside the Reggae Lounge, a wooden shack club in the township of Salem.

They overturned rubbish bins, smashed beer bottles, banged bongo drums and expressed their disgust with the evacuation compensation package.

pressed their disgust with an evacuation compensation package announced earlier in the day by the Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short. The so-called "voluntary repatriation", or evacuation, begins today but most Montserratians consider the British package woefully inadequate and are wondering why they should now be encouraged to leave their island when the volcano is more peaceful than it has been for weeks.

"What did Britain ever do for us?" shouted one man, wearing a red, yellow and green woollen hat, and a T-shirt saying "Hey man, no problem, Africa unite." For the first time in the modern history of this Caribbean colony, the local police, mostly from other Caribbean islands and wearing riot squad helmets they had never used before, waded in with their batons.

As hordes bounced off his outside wall and a policeman went down injured, Larry Skeritt closed the doors of his Desert Storm bar and came out to watch the action. The protesters continued to use his oil drum rubbish bins, full of empty Heineken and Guinness bottles, for ammunition.

That's when Mr Hooper arrived in his white Jeep, but before he could work out what was



Evacuation: Montserratians boarding a boat for Antigua yesterday. Some 400 are expected to leave the island today

Photograph: Reuters

They overturned rubbish bins, smashed beer bottles, banged bongo drums and expressed their disgust with the evacuation compensation package. The 'voluntary repatriation' begins today

going on, half a dozen of his men, wearing British military gas masks and carrying tear gas launchers and shotguns, ran at the protesters, clubbing them, grabbing four of the ringleaders and hauling them off.

The protesters fought back and bottles flew but the Englishman, the only white man in sight, walked into the mêlée, pulled his men off and ordered

them back. Surrounded by chanting and pushing youths, he began a dialogue.

"Let's calm it down, shall we?" he said. "This is not the way to go about it. I will take my officers away if you go away."

"I don't have no place to go," shouted Joseph Fagin, wearing a half-empty bottle of Guinness. "The volcano took my home."

"If you clean up the street, I'll release the men detained," said the police chief. "You go and fucking clean it up," replied Stedroy Brade, wearing a T-shirt that read: "Tough times don't last, tough people do. Soufriere volcano 1997."

"What is the protest about?" asked Mr Hooper. "Equal rights and justice," replied Mr Fagin. "I want a house with two

bedrooms, a bathroom and a kitchen. I can't go to Antigua. Over-populated, I can't go to Guadeloupe. Don't speak French."

Mr Hooper's gas-masked men began to move forward. "Get back. Now!" yelled their boss. "We demand to see the Queen," shouted a protester.

"Let's stop all this messing about," said Mr Hooper. "Who's got a broom?"

"I'll clean up the street if you free our brothers," said Mr Brade.

"Free the prisoners. Fucking now!" Mr Hooper yelled to his men.

A dreadlocked youth got on his knees in front of the police commissioner, looked up at him and said: "You're a good

man. You rule over me." The detained youths appeared, with ripped T-shirts and bruises, and rejoined their comrades.

One of the noisiest youths took Mr Hooper's hand and walked him back to his jeep as the protesters and bystanders applauded.

To complete Mr Hooper's memorable day, Agnes Cassell, a friendly but mentally-disturbed Salem resident, jumped on the bonnet of his car and danced to the reggae music from a nearby ghetto-blaster.

"I'm the poor fool who arrived here seven days before the volcano erupted [in 1995]," the commissioner told me later. "Nobody mentioned any volcano when I volunteered."

In the face of the mounting

street protests, local government Chief Minister Bertrand Osborne handed in his resignation on Thursday night. His deputy, lawyer and parliamentarian David Brandt, is expected to replace him and form a new government but rumours are rife here that Britain may take outright control in the face of the volcano and evacuation crisis.

"These protests are a natural expression of people's frustrations," British Governor Frank Savage said on the local radio yesterday.

"The final turn of the screw of the volcano has proved just too much for us."

"But while I understand these frustrations, this sends a wrong signal. It's not our way in Montserrat."

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South Africans discover xenophobia as foreigners flood in looking for work

Mary Braid Johannesburg

Wielding sjamboks and sticks the 30-strong gang of men attacked street traders in Johannesburg city centre screaming in Zulu "phantsi ngokwerekwere" - down with the foreigners.

As hawkers from all over Africa scattered for cover, trying to protect their stock, a trader from Senegal was beaten until he bled, and had bricks thrown at him. The attack on Monday was the second by South African street sellers on foreign hawkers in less than a week.

The previous Wednesday six were arrested after shop windows were smashed, stalls overturned and foreign vendors attacked when hundreds of hawkers went on the rampage after a meeting in Johannesburg to protest at the influx of "alien" sellers onto the streets. By the afternoon usually bustling streets were eerily silent.

Xenophobes all over the world seem to share the same dictionary. Manekie Solomon, chairman of the Inner Johannesburg Hawkers Committee, told the Sowetan newspaper that foreign traders were "leeches" who dirtied the streets and stole South African jobs. He and his members had not fought in the liberation struggle to let this happen.

In a country where official unemployment is more than 35 per cent and jobs in the formal sector scarce, scapegoats are being sought.

Johannesburg Council estimates 14,000 traders from around the world are now making R100m (£13.5m), tax free, from selling everything from roasted mealies (corn cobs) to leather handbags.

The two attacks are the first dramatic signs of the savage competition for work. More worrying, they highlight the growing xenophobia of black South Africans towards migrants from other parts of the continent, whom they blame for



Get out of town: Migrant hawkers scatter as local street vendors in Johannesburg attack them last week. The traders blame foreigners for stealing jobs

everything from rising crime to unemployment.

This week the South African Human Rights Commission said the attacks were a fundamental abuse of the human rights of immigrants, who were protected under South Africa's celebrated new constitution. A spokesman said the attacks denied the international image of South Africa, particularly in Africa. One outraged black journalist, who witnessed the first attack, was clearly ashamed. "Are we not all Africans?" he said.

South Africa has experienced a flood of illegal African immigrants fleeing economic and social instability. Last year 180,713 were repatriated.

The majority came from Mozambique and Zimbabwe, although some have trekked from as far as Ethiopia. Those who are expelled are believed to be just the tip of the iceberg. Estimates of how many illegal immigrants are in the country range from 500,000 to 6 million.

Some take desperate risks. The first attack in Johannesburg city centre came as Kruger National Park revealed a pride of

lions had been put down after eating a Mozambican man trying to cross illegally into South Africa. The lions were believed to be responsible for killing three other Mozambicans.

In the past nine months 11 people have been eaten by wild animals while trying to enter South Africa illegally, including a woman and her two-year-old son. There are also reports of Zimbabweans trying to swim the Limpopo River being eaten by crocodiles.

The influx of illegal immigrants - and the widespread xenophobia - is causing much soul searching. It costs South Africa at least R200m a year to remove illegals, who invariably turn up again weeks later.

As the army and police struggle to patrol the huge border more radical solutions are being suggested. Some academics claim it would be better to accept the border cannot be maintained, and allow immigrants to come in without penalty. They argue that the numbers involved are exaggerated and that the same people are being repatriated again and again.

Christian Rogerson and Talibre Toure, researchers at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, challenge the notion that immigrants are a drain on the system. They claim immigrants actually create employment through their small businesses. Other recent research concluded migration was good for the economy because it brought in people with initiative.

Religious leaders, meanwhile, are appealing to a sense of fair play and attention to recent history. "While unemployment is a crisis for South Africa, that is no reason for the callous ill treatment of economic refugees who come to South Africa," said Bishop Mvume Dandale of the Southern Africa Methodist Church.

Reverend Paul Verryn, the Methodist bishop whose parish covers Johannesburg city centre, said attackers should remember that many African states had aided the struggle by protecting, housing and employing some of the country's current key leaders. The implication was clear: this was hardly the way to repay past favours.

Boston's mayor a 70-year-old w
Mary Dejevsky
Washington
The mayor of Boston, Ray W. Whitely, is 70 years old. He was elected in 1993. He is a member of the Democratic Party. He is a member of the United States House of Representatives. He is a member of the United States Senate. He is a member of the United States Supreme Court. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals. He is a member of the United States District Court. He is a member of the United States Bankruptcy Court. He is a member of the United States Tax Court. He is a member of the United States Court of Military Appeals. He is a member of the United States Court of Veterans Appeals. He is a member of the United States Court of Federal Claims. He is a member of the United States Court of International Trade. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the First Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Twelfth Circuit. He is a member of the United States Court of Appeals for the Thirteenth Circuit. 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Disney celebrates first birthday of town they built out of the American dream

Celebration, Florida

It nestles by a blue lagoon, its classically styled clapboard houses glistening in the blazing sun. Its pristine main street, lined with small shops, begins at the colonnaded town hall and ends in a bower at the water's edge. There are neat village streets that curve and weave, defying the standard grid pattern, and a garden square or two. The brand-new school is not like most new schools - stranded way outside town. There are woods and grass and even pavements that lead somewhere. Everyone is linked by a town-wide "intranet" and, of course, there is a golf course.

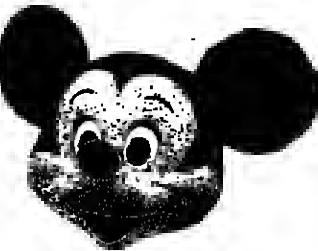
But for any American with intellectual pretensions and for any European with half a sense of history, there is only one politically correct response to this small town in the central Florida marshes. It is "Ugh!" To its detractors, Celebration commits two cardinal sins simply by being there: it is a completely artificial construct and it is a product of the ever-spreading Disney Company. But for the several dozen couples and families who visit the town each day with a view to settling here, these are its charms. Strange though this may seem in Europe, much of Middle America associates Disney not with kitsch and commercialisation, but with "quality" and "family values". It guarantees a traditional sort of safety; you can rely on it.

And what these Americans (like the late Walt Disney before them) hanker after is the small town of imagined childhood memory: a town with a centre, with walkable streets and houses that look as though they ought to look; a town where you feel safe enough to leave your front door unlocked, let your children walk to school, and lend your neighbour a cup of sugar.

Small matter that, as sophisticated say dismissively, such a town never existed, except perhaps in the pictures of Norman Rockwell (another object of their scorn). The message of Celebration, joyously received by aspiring townspeople, is that even if it did not exist, it could - and would - have been invented. Now, a year after the first residents moved in, Celebration is, depending on your point of view, a town of 1,200 souls, or no soul at all.

Some have dubbed it a "company town" and drawn parallels with the forward-looking settlements built by paternalistic employers for their workers - like Fort Sunlight near Liverpool. But Celebration is not a charitable endeavour, nor is it paternalistic, and it is not populated by Disney employees.

Celebration was devised and planned by a specially formed subsidiary of the Disney Company on Disney-owned land



But intellectuals snub gleaming experiment with reality, reports Mary Dejevsky

just south of the theme parks with twin aims: to meet a perceived demand for a town like this, and to see whether Walt Disney's original idea for Epcot (the experimental prototype community of tomorrow which became just another theme park) could work for real. "Experimental prototype community of yesterday", scoff critics - even though demand for houses has exceeded supply.

There are no qualifications for living there, the Celebration Company insists, but you have to demonstrate your commitment by buying or building a house there, and then living in it at least nine months of the year. The prices alone operate as a sort of selection: starting around \$160,000 (£100,000) for more modest houses, they are very high compared with prices locally. The architectural constraints are another bar: only certain styles and features are permitted so as to maintain the "integrity" of the whole. "Mickey Mouse town", say the critics.

A year on, people are still buying. Most houses are occupied and term at the school has just begun. The next development phase has been accelerated and a massive hospital and recreation complex is scheduled to open early.

Despite all this activity, the streets by day seem strangely empty and the report card on the town's first year is mixed. Enthusiasts talk about friendliness, safety and civilisation. Critics talk of sanitised living and wonder whether a "community" can be built so easily.

A few of the bigger mansions are back on the market. A number of families became disillusioned with the experimental school curriculum and the fact that the new building was not ready last year. They had expected a sound dose of the three Rs in a state-of-the-art building, and presumably straight A grades for their offspring.

This innate conservatism, in fact, seems to characterise Celebration better than its experimental aspect. For, despite its novel beginning, the town re-

sembles nothing so much as an upmarket white suburb of almost any United States city, with the houses just squashed up a little for a faux-urban effect.

Its appeal is identical to that of such suburbs: its residents select themselves by income and aspiration. With its small-town arrangement and its small shops and cafes, it seems to offer the best of both worlds.

Last summer, as the first residents arrived, the chief questions raised by Celebration derived from its artificiality. Can a community be created from scratch? The company says that is up to the residents. Can, and should, a town be started and effectively governed by a corporation? The company replies that local democracy will grow. But will it, if the residents prefer to live as Disney-style customers rather than democratic participants?

A year on, however, Celebration poses another question. It is an extension of the question posed by the proliferation of exclusive and largely self-contained suburbs around major US cities. Should one section of the population be able to withdraw so completely as to be living in a separate world? And if not, how can that trend possibly be stopped?



Clean sheet: Celebration has picture-book buildings and walkable streets where residents feel safe, but no history yet. Photograph: Stuart Clarke

over
ners
work



Emmarked: Builders taking a break. Demand for houses in the town exceeds supply. Photograph: Kevin Wisniewski

Boston's mayor rights a 70-year-old wrong

Mary Dejevsky
Washington

The mayor of Boston will today formally accept a memorial plaque to two executed Italian immigrants whose fate became a symbol for injustice in the United States.

Thomas Menino's action, 70 years after the two self-confessed anarchists, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, went to the electric chair for murder and armed robbery, marks the latest attempt by the city to lay the affair to rest.

Sacco, a cobbler, and Vanzetti, a fish pedlar, were tried and sentenced for robbing a paymaster and his guard at a time of fierce anti-immigrant sentiment in the US. The fairness of the judge was questioned. Twenty years ago, on the 50th anniversary of the execution, the then governor of Massachusetts, Michael Dukakis, described the event as "a classic example of a miscarriage of justice" and said there was a strong case for believing one or both men were innocent. This week, Mr Menino, Boston's first Italian-American mayor, said he was accepting the plaque because it represented an important part of American history.

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international

Why Mir crew had to walk on wild side

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

The restoration of power to the Mir space station yesterday was a major step back to full operation - but the harder task may lie ahead of the three-man crew, who are having a well-earned rest this weekend from repair duties.

The biggest problem, which has yet to be tackled, will be to fix the hole in the Spektr module, caused on 25 June when a Progress supply ship crashed slowly but unstoppably into it. Repairing that hole, which still renders Spektr unusable, will involve an outside space-walk and a patching job that has never actually been attempted on a working spacecraft.

Fixing holes in spacecraft is not a task that anyone undertakes lightly: if the seal is not perfect then it could fail catastrophically, and cause a repeat of the desperate five-minute scramble to seal off the module that led to power cables being cut off last time.

Nor have there been any occasions when such a fix has been required. Previously, collisions in space have either been minor - such as an orbiting paint speck which dented but did not puncture a Space Shuttle window some years ago - or total, as happened last year when a telecommunications satellite abruptly stopped working - almost certainly due to being hit by "space junk".

However, if the hole can be fixed, using a combination of high-tech glues and simple patching, then Spektr will come back into its own as the only permanent floating laboratory presently available in space. Companies and governments in the United States, Europe and Japan are all prepared to pay handsomely for science experiments to be performed in the exceptional conditions of space.

That is an important money-earner for Russia. Although President Boris Yeltsin yesterday pledged that the 1998 Russian budget would provide more money for space and avi-

ation, implicitly slapping down the comments of a treasury minister earlier in the week that "Mir should be left to burn up", it has to earn its keep and that means getting back into Spektr and starting the experiments going again - British born crew member Michael Foale had to abandon them abruptly when the air started hissing out of his module.

Restoring the power from the solar panels on Spektr, the newest of the six modules that comprise Mir, will boost the energy available up to 90 per cent of its maximum, and should end the repeated problems which have seen the space station losing its gyroscopic orientation and spinning chaotically through its orbit, losing extra power because its panels are not oriented correctly to pick up the sunlight.

Exactly when the leak can be repaired is still a matter for debate, however. Yesterday's mission did not find it at once, which is why the external space-walk is necessary.



Andriy Solovyov



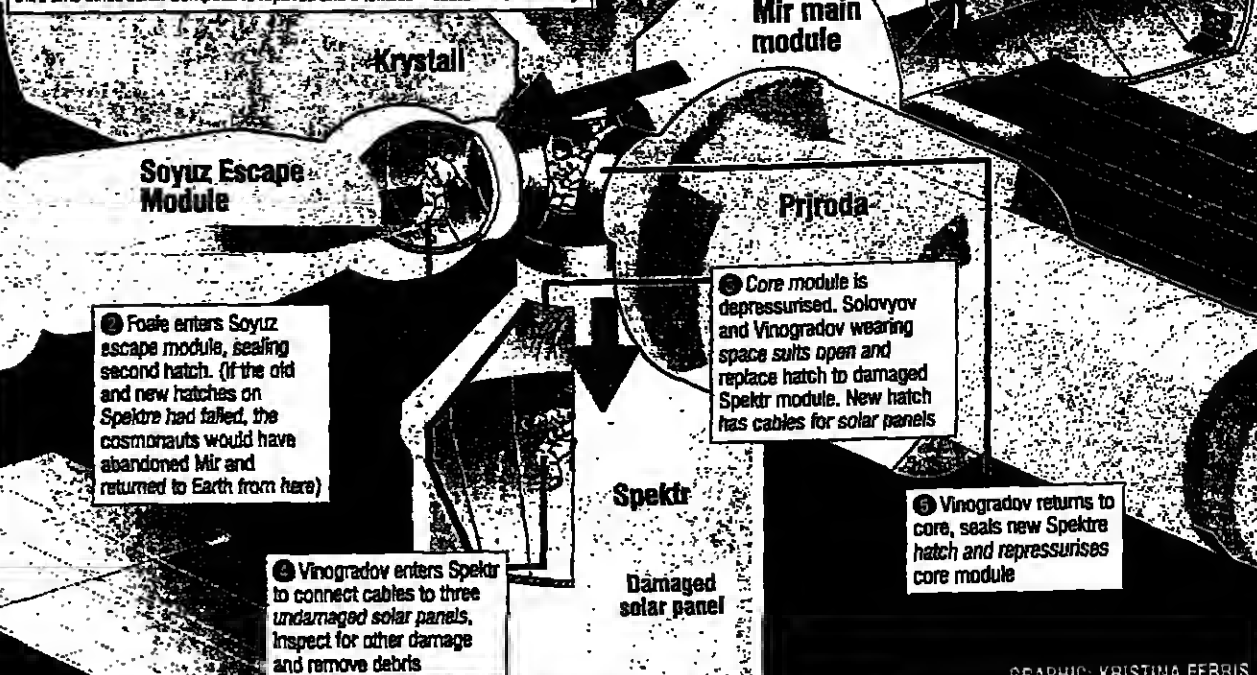
Pavel Vinogradov



Michael Foale

the faults so far

Feb 24 - Fire breaks out when cosmonauts try to change an air filter. The crew have to wear gas masks against fumes released during the incident.
March 6 - Cargo ship Progress fails to dock with Mir and is dumped.
March 7 - Generator providing oxygen fails, forcing the crew to use backup chemical system.
April 4 - Leak develops in cooling system, temporarily knocking out a device used to maintain breathable air on board.
June 25 - Another Progress cargo craft hits Mir during practice docking, puncturing Spektr module and damaging solar batteries. July 3 - Navigation devices to keep solar energy panels fixed up to the sun fail. Adjusted by next day.
July 5 - Cosmonauts report they hear thumps and see something leaking overboard from the damaged module. Officials say they do not know what leaked but insist it was not fuel.
July 17 - Crew member mistakenly pulls out a vital computer cable, prompting massive power failure.
August 7 - Failure in automatic docking system forces arriving relief cosmonauts to go to manual docking at last minute.
August 14 - Booster rocket which should ease landing of Soyuz capsule bringing cosmonauts back to Earth fails, giving them a rough landing but no injuries.
August 17 - Mir suddenly cancels docking with resupply ship after computer programming error.
August 18 - Main computer fails, sending Mir spinning in disorientation for the third time since June. Computer is repaired and orientation reestablished in a day.



GRAPHIC: KRISTINA FERRIS

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significant shorts

Two killed in Kenyan church shooting

Gunmen shot and killed two displaced Kenyans in a raid on a church compound south of the Indian Ocean city of Mombasa yesterday, taking the toll from 10 days of ethnic attacks in the region to 42 people dead. On a positive note for Kenya, International Monetary Fund officials said a delegation would arrive in Nairobi on Monday to discuss with President Daniel arap Moi a date for resuming negotiations on a \$205m aid package halted last month. The President arrived in Mombasa by helicopter yesterday on his first visit to the coast since the start of the violence. Reuters - Ukoni

Tutsis massacred in camp

At least 107 refugees were killed and 30 wounded in an attack on a camp housing Tutsis from former Zaire in Rwanda's northwestern border region of Gisenyi. United Nations spokeswoman Pamela O'Boyle said preliminary reports indicated that the ethnic Tutsis, who fled fighting in the Masisi region in eastern Zaire, were massacred with machetes by unidentified attackers late on Thursday night. Rwandan government officials put the death toll higher at 120, including local civilians. Reuters - Geneva.

Erbakan chats with Le Pen

Turkey's Islamist leader Necmettin Erbakan and France's far-right Jean-Marie Le Pen held an unlikely meeting at a Turkish seaside retreat. The Milliyet newspaper said they held six hours of talks on Thursday in a hotel in Altinoluk on the Aegean, where former prime minister Erbakan regularly takes breaks. "A meeting of opposites took place. Our leader made recommendations to Le Pen and told him about Turkey," Welfare Party MP Mehmet Ali Sahin said. Reuters - Ankara

Rome punishes injury to dragon

An Italian court sentenced a man to three months in jail for damaging a fountain and ordered him to pay the costs of restoring Rome's 17th-century Bernini sculpture. Sebastiano Intili, who snapped off the tail of a dragon in the fountain in the Piazza Navona, was also ordered to pay legal costs of some £2m (£695). Intili's lawyer said his client would file counter-charges, demanding that the city council pay him £300m (£104,250). Reuters - Rome

هكذا من الاجل

A happy summer for the health police

Bank holidays, as any city dweller knows, are best spent at home. Streets are deserted, supermarket queues are short and a delicious quiet descends as the neighbours head for the country and the beach. Now doctors have offered an extra reason for eschewing the sybaritic delights of Clacton or Clitheroe. Going away can be bad for the heart.

Hours spent in a hot tin can jammed in a line of hot tin cans, diesel fumes mingling with the aroma of marmite sandwiches and bruised bananas while fractious kids demand "Are we there yet?" from the back ought to make anyone ill. Now the British Heart Foundation has unnecessarily warned that the combination of travel, hot weather and air pollution can spell danger for those "intent on fun". Amazing.

It has been a bumper summer for the health police. We have had warnings about the sun, the air, and the sea, about impurities in drinking water, *E coli* 0157 and nerve damage caused by vitamins (B6). But outdoing all these have been warnings about the heart.

Within the space of six weeks, at least half a dozen theories about the causes of heart disease and heart attacks have been offered by scientists. The proliferation of theories and estimates of risk leave the average reader floundering, wondering whether to change jobs, spouse, diet or holiday plans. Scientifically, there may be nothing to fault. But in public health terms it is a disaster. Any bar-room

medic trying to assess the competing arguments can only conclude that doctors are as ignorant as the rest of us - and mine's a pint, a greasy bacon sarnie and a packet of 20 please, guv.

A striking example of the difficulties the public face occurred last month. On 23 July, the National Heart Forum called a press conference to highlight Britain's poor record on heart disease measured against comparable countries and to reinforce the message on diet, exercise and smoking. These three, the experts said, accounted for most of the variation in heart disease rates and there was no other factor, either known or likely to be discovered, that had an impact of a similar magnitude on the risk.

Yet the following day, a paper in *The Lancet*, the latest in a series to emerge from a 20-year examination of 10,000 civil servants known as the Whitehall study, showed bosses who have control over their work are less likely to suffer heart attacks than workers who don't. Those on the top floor were healthier than those on the shop floor and it was the degree of participation in decisions that accounted for most of the difference.

Reconciling these two views of the causes of heart disease demands an appreciation of relative risk. Comparing overfed, understretched (in a physical sense) Westerners with their lean, active cousins in the developing world leaves no doubt about the importance of the traditional risk factors of diet, exercise and smok-



ing. But within Western nations, differences persist between groups. When comparing British executives with British clerks, job control appears to account for almost half the variation of heart attack risk - but that is a small difference compared to the benefit (in heart disease terms) of being born in, say, Uganda.

That is only the start of the confusion. This week, researchers reported that submissive women have one third of the risk of suffering an attack compared with those who are more assertive. Earlier research has shown that aggressive, ambitious Type A personalities are more prone to attacks than relaxed Type B ones. Next week a new study will suggest that men who give blood reduce their risk by depleting their iron stores - in the same way that women do naturally through menstruation. Red wine, what your mother ate during pregnancy, and infection have also been implicated.

So, where does that leave us? Meek, non-smoking blood donors who run their own lives, eat up their greens and cycle to work shall live long enough to inherit the earth - while the rest of us enjoy life, ignore the health advice, and die young.

Science offers no simple answers. We have to learn to live with uncertainty and accept that scientific understanding proceeds like football - with much, apparently purposeless, running around punctuated by occasional flashes of brilliance that move the game forward.

The drawback is that this leaves openings for those who wish to exploit the uncertainty for their own commercial advantage. Yesterday, David Bacon, head of corporate communication at British American Tobacco, sought in muddy the clear message on smoking delivered a day earlier by Geoffrey Bible, the chairman and chief executive of the US tobacco giant Philip Morris, that cigarettes "might have" killed 100,000 Americans.

In a piece of sophistry of the sort we have come to expect from the tobacco industry, Mr Bacon sought to represent this historic admission as no more than an observation about the statistical link between smoking and lung cancer. He claimed the disease's biological cause had "still to be established".

Technically he may be right, but morally his position is bankrupt. There can be no doubt about the lethal nature of cigarettes yet this message is still being fudged three decades after it became a certainty.

On the major issues of public health - smoking, heart disease, cancer - where there is a measure of agreement, we need scientists to sign up to the basic thesis rather than squabbling over the finer points. Scientific accuracy demands an assessment both of the strength of the evidence and of the power of the conclusion. Facts are not sacred, they require interpretation.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Devolution is best for Scotland and Westminster

Sir: The three letters printed today (20 August) demonstrate a lack of understanding of devolution. First, it does not duplicate effort. Over two centuries the demands upon our system of government have increased enormously, with the addition of myriad responsibilities. The UK Parliament does not have time to debate important issues in sufficient detail. As many big businesses have done, it makes sense to do things efficiently by devolving responsibility to the component parts, allowing them to consider their needs in detail and at the same time freeing up Westminster to focus on UK issues in sufficient detail.

Secondly, proportional representation will help prevent corruption, unlike the first past the post system that has encouraged corruption at both local and national level. It is highly unlikely that any party, let alone a clique, will gain a majority in the Scottish Parliament, as they would need to gain more than 50 per cent of the vote to do so. Instead parties will have to co-operate with each other, agreeing no policies which are thus likely to be in tune with the wishes of the majority of the electorate.

Thirdly, there are few areas where disputes between the UK and Scottish Parliaments can develop, as their respective areas of responsibility will be clearly delineated. In the event that there are disagreements, comprehensive mechanisms are proposed in the

White Paper for addressing these in talks between the Cabinet and the Scottish Executive. Ultimately, any dispute can be referred to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council.

In any case, it is better that there are occasional disputes between two elected Parliaments than the feelings of deep resentment that developed in Scotland while subjected in 18 years of Conservative rule. For a nation that consistently elected a majority of non-Tory MPs it was galling to be subjected to Thatcherite experiments like the poll tax. The depth of that resentment was demonstrated on the 1 May when no Tories were elected in Scotland at all. SAM GIBBALDAN Press Officer Scotland FORWARD Edinburgh

Sir: The argument about whether or not a referendum should be held before or after the Devolution Act is passed through Parliament misses the point (Sheena McDonald, "Labour's slippery offering to the people of Scotland", 22 August).

Tam Dalyell MP may believe that the devil lies in the detail but I doubt whether the average voter is going to base their final decision on what the Act will have to say on savings and investments, personal pensions and annuity schemes etc, or should they. Instead, the

referendum vote should be based upon a consideration of basic constitutional principles.

Do the Scottish people want Scottish affairs to be governed by representatives directly accountable for their work, or do they trust British MPs to do the job for them? Furthermore, are Scottish people willing to take genuine responsibility for their own affairs, to put their money where their mouth is? That is the broad gist of the proposals, and as such is clearly outlined by the White Paper and the Labour manifesto.

These are the questions which the referendum should address, meanwhile Parliament, if it is designed for any purpose at all, is there to scrutinise the detail. That function will be better able to perform once the basic principles have been accepted by the Scottish people. One need only recall the filibustering which accompanied the 1978-9 legislation to realise the common sense behind the present government's approach.

But just in case Sheena McDonald is correct and the voter really is about to rest their decision on the precise detail of the Devolution Act, might I suggest that we are truly democratic and have not two questions on the referendum paper but one question for every clause of the Act. RICHARD KIRKHAM Sheffield

Cars, trams and trolleybuses

Sir: One city that has, proportionately, similar problems to London is Prague ("Whn needs a second car?", 22 August). Built on lines completely incompatible with the motor car, and filled with both a large tourist and indigenous population, it can show John Prescott a (subsidised) solution that works.

As a regular visitor, I never attempt to use my car in the city. Parking is severely restricted to residents and where there are car parks, they are comparatively expensive. The alternatives are cheap and plentiful, but their prime attraction is their reliability.

Trams have priority over all other traffic. Buses run exactly on time - again due to their priority over other vehicles. The Metro runs on time and has surroundings both pleasant and functional. A ticket costs 10 crowns (20p) and lasts for one hour after being stamped at the start of a journey. Mixing forms of travel during that hour is unrestricted.

Mussolini may have made the trains run on time, but Mr Prescott should look to Havel for his model for a transport solution, for London at least. M GODDARD London SW7

Sir: Stephen Cromie (Letter, 18 August) perpetuates the myth that "motorists" are on the road by choice, and have an option to use public transport.

For most motorists no the M25, for example, there is no practical public transport option, because the rail infrastructure in and around London is designed to carry people in and from the centre, not from suburb to suburb. Since many businesses have moved out from the centre to these very suburbs, their staffs have to commute from suburb to suburb.

Instead of widening the M25, expenditure on a parallel "ring rail" connecting the outer London suburbs, the radial rail services and Heathrow would be far more beneficial. KEITH HALES Uxbridge, Middlesex

Sir: There is a better solution to urban chaos than the tramcar. For silent, speedy operation in town centres the trolleybus beats the tramcar any day. On holiday recently I was glad to see that this vehicle still exists in Belgium and Austria. I saw examples in daily use in Ghent, Innsbruck and Salzburg. I rode on an articulated trolleybus

from a hotel on the outskirts to the centre of Salzburg.

It had good acceleration, good bus-type accommodation, and being unconstrained by tracks, was able to move to the side of the road for easy access. Its rubber tyres made for noise-free comfort. In 1952 London had the highest concentration of trolleybuses in the world. Some were even built during World War II to reduce consumption of precious imported fuel in favour of home-produced coal. Some double-deckers had a maximum capacity of 54 passengers. The only disadvantage was that two overhead wires were needed, but this was counterbalanced by the fact that trolleybuses run on ordinary roads, with no track laying or maintenance. D L SMITH Deventry, Northamptonshire

Sir: In the laudable discussion about fewer cars, a cleaner environment, and better public transport, no one appears to have considered what is for many a major problem, namely how do you get the shopping home? Our mothers and grandmothers, many of them full-time housewives, needed to shop several times a week in order to ensure fresh food and many shops at that time made regular home deliveries.

It is quite impractical to expect today's working parents, who get to a supermarket once a week after work, and often with small children in tow, to lug a full trolley's worth of groceries home no bus or train. Unless this problem is addressed, the second car will be here to stay. MARY MACRAE-GIBSON Burton, Norfolk

Sir: Ministers are considering a ban on local, non-commercial traffic from the M6, giving more space for long-distance heavy-goods vehicles. I can see a vision, an M6 with loads of room for nose-to-tail trucks - hanging on, it looks a bit like the mainline train that does almost the same journey each day. MARTIN WAYNESS Windermere, Cumbria

Sir: Has anyone mentioned car insurers as a way of controlling traffic? My son, who lives in Vancouver, Canada, travels to work daily on the bus as there is a reduced rate of car insurance on cars which are not taken into town by commuters during the week. P A DAY Woodplumpton, Preston

Loss of TV archive programmes

Sir: Whilst the wiping of *Not Only... But Also* may be undesirable ("BBC recorded local news over classic Pete 'n' Dud", 21 August), it uses questionable logic to reach the conclusion that news coverage which replaced it is of lesser value.

News items are often unique, and totally irreplaceable: Dud and Pete at least have had a selection of their output preserved, and scripts are surely available for other material.

Furthermore, the fact that clearances from the archive concentrated on light entertainment and drama, leaving news coverage behind, owes much to the short-sighted behaviour by the likes of Equity on behalf of their artists. The union limited repeats of older material in favour of new productions.

Once overseas sales had been exhausted by the BBC, and with little chance of it being re-screened, much material became unusable and archiving a drain on the licence payer's money.

Utilising the space for news makes commercial sense under the circumstances.

Had Equity undertaken to finance the archiving of the material in conjunction with the BBC, older programmes might still have been with us yet.

Only the unforeseen development of domestic video revealed that this material had further commercial exploitation potential, by which time it was too late. SIMON DOYLE London NW3

Sir: Comedy producer Harry Thompson describes as "cultural vandalism" the loss of episodes

from the Sixties Peter Cook and Dudley Moore series *Not Only... But Also* (report, 21 August).

But was keeping local news really given any greater priority? I understand that when BBC Manchester moved to their new headquarters on Oxford Road in the Seventies, their local news library was taken in by the North-West Film Archive at Manchester Polytechnic.

Are programmes being preserved as well as they could be today? I first became alarmed about these disappearing programmes in 1980. Since then, I have built up a collection of off-air recordings on VHS. A couple of years ago, when I heard a story that *Blackadder* had been destroyed, I contacted the BBC Film and Television Library.

They denied that any of this series was missing. I mentioned some of the other recordings that I have. When I asked about the Carla Lane comedy *Butterflies*, the reply was "yes, I think we have most of those". I asked if the library would like a list of my material and was told I could send one if I wanted, but not to go in any trouble.

VHS may not be broadcast quality, but surely it is better than nothing. And those Australian *Stepie and Son* recordings that BBC2 screened were hardly good quality.

As your article points out, we do seem to see the same old, limited range of clips from a number of series. It is high time that more was done to safeguard our TV heritage. GEOFF STAFFORD Belford, Northumberland

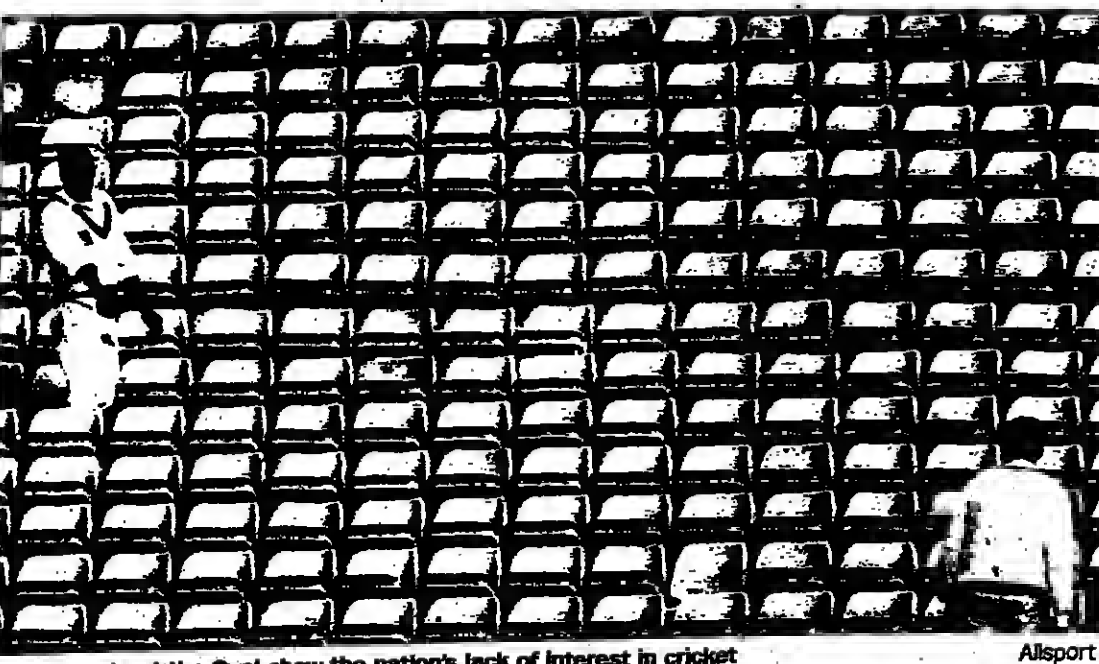
Good GPs need communication skills

Sir: I despair that a fellow member of the profession with the seniority of John Adams (Letters, 22 August) should equate high grades at A-level with skilled, empathetic GPs.

There is no evidence that those who do best at A-level achieve more than those with lower grades at either second year (2nd MB) or finals exams. What we need, as Jeremy Laurence suggested ("Doctor, doctor, you're out on my wavelength", 20 August), is an effective dual system which puts weight on the ability of applicants to work together in teams and to communicate. This would require some effort

and financial input on the part of the medical schools in organising. The 15-minute interview (and even this is not universal) simply cannot assess these skills adequately.

General practice is an exciting and dynamic speciality. But it is not the knowledge base alone which makes for good GPs. It is the ability to communicate that knowledge effectively, and empathise with the patient. Dr SARAH MATTHEWS Department of General Practice University of Wales College of Medicine Llanedeyrn, Cardiff



Empty seats at the Oval show the nation's lack of interest in cricket

Cricket is enjoyed by the Establishment, not by the public

Sir: I would encourage the Government to allow cricket to sell TV rights to the likes of BSkyB ("Test cricket may go to satellite TV", 18 August); perhaps then our televisions will be freed from the BBC's countless hours of prime network time devoted to the game.

Contrary to accepted wisdom, cricket in the UK is a sport which is truly enjoyed by only a small minority but which gets far more

than its fair share of media coverage. Unlike with football, the nation's lack of interest in cricket is clearly apparent from the thousands of empty seats regularly seen around the televised games.

One can almost imagine it as some kind of state religion, with the Establishment trying to expose the public to it in quantities large enough to make them begin to think it is good for them. Let's stop this nonsense and make those

who really do like cricket pay to watch it on dedicated channels. ALISTAIR LENCZNER London SW4

Sir: If BSkyB are interested in covering Test Cricket they should be allowed to purchase it on one condition: that they take over responsibility for broadcasting Test Match Special from Radio 4 as well. JAMES MB McLAREN Cheltenham

Britain's policy towards its dependants used to be dignified

Sir: Your leader ("Dereliction of duty in the shadow of a volcano", 21 August) rightly points out the shame of the 1981 British Nationality Act, which stripped thousands of British citizens of dependent territories of the right of abode in the UK.

Now a Private Member's Bill, introduced by the Earl of Inverclyde in the House of Lords, is seeking to end this injustice and restore full nationality status to the

residents of the island of St Helena, and its dependent islands.

When one of these islands, Tristan da Cunha, suffered its own volcanic eruption in 1961, the islanders were evacuated 6,000 miles to the UK until the island was safe to re-inhabit. In those days - when Britain had a more

dignified policy towards its dependent territories - the islanders were still full British citizens and were able to choose whether to stay in Britain or return home to Tristan. Only a handful chose to stay. SAUL BILLINGSLEY London N4

Master plan for the Festival Hall

Sir: I was the master planner for the South Bank for six years and support the proposals to re-plan this urban quarter, as it really needs it. My plans incorporated a lightweight enclosure to the Queen Elizabeth Hall and Hayward Gallery and Lord Rogers' scheme follows this thinking and has many other very positive aspects.

However, I always planned to involve other architects to create diversity and, in particular, hated and wished to undo the "mega" architecture of the original LOC scheme that wrapped the Festival Hall, and in doing the whole site, in octopus tentacles of the same concrete design.

Like Professor Robert Maxwell (Letters, 13 August), I am therefore concerned that Lord Rogers' scheme may well, in the end, be perceived as doing the same thing, ie enveloping the site

in one kind of architecture, wrapping the Festival Hall in the same glass canopies as the main Queen Elizabeth Hall and Hayward Gallery enclosures.

Not only could this suppress a huge area in one architectural expression, with a loss of diversity, urban richness and variety, it could also be quite overwhelming for the Festival Hall which might sit (in the tradition of Thames-side "palaces") on its own territory, commanding its own entrances. TERRY FARRELL London W9

Sir: Though a passionate advocate of modern architecture, I too have misgivings about the proposed "improvements" to the South Bank complex. In fact, during my frequent visits I find myself thinking that a good slice down, generous applications of white paint and a few nice plants would "bring it up a treat". BRIDGET BODOANO London SW12

QUOTE UNQUOTE

I feel like the roots of a great bunch of flowers. The grower gets the praise, the flowers get the adoration, while the roots that started it all must remain under the ground unnoticed - Thomas Gallagher, father of the Oats brothers Liam and Noel

It was like a slowly spreading pool of blood seeping out from under a locked door - Patrick Jephson, former private secretary to Diana, Princess of Wales, on life at Kensington Palace during his seven years there

Laura Ashley did not accept that women wanted to be liberated from the home. Her anti-fashion stand led her to declare that the clothes she designed should be comfortable enough to enable a mother to bend down and pick up toys - Anne Sebba, Laura Ashley's biographer

We simply can't give roasted swans to the public this season - Derek Deane, artistic director of English National Ballet, who has ordered dancers not to sunbathe ahead of their production of *Swan Lake*

When David Jenkins, the former Bishop of Durham, retired he left a vacancy in the cast list of our national life for a barny bishop. I was passing the theatre door at the time and before I knew it, I was on stage auditioning for the role. I seem to have landed the job - Dr Richard Holloway, Bishop of Edinburgh

You know what his name is? He's called Peter. Do you think you will get to the executive, Peter? - John Prescott, Deputy Prime Minister, holding up a crab and mocking Peter Mandelson's bid to win a place on Labour's National Executive Committee

the saturday story

The little people of Paisley

The scandal in the west of Scotland has caught the nation's attention, but it's just a typical tale of small town corruption says Christian Wolmar

The councillors of Renfrewshire were on their best behaviour at their meeting on Thursday. There was no shouting or screaming and very few interruptions. This was unprecedented. The meetings in the Sixties council headquarters in Paisley are usually as brutal as the architecture of the building, with confrontations between Labour and the Scottish National Party, falling just short of the physical. The police have been called several times, not to deal with the public, but to control the councillors.

Conscious of the presence of a large contingent of journalists, the councillors managed to moderate their behaviour, but not their language. The SNP leader, Bruce McFee, a big man with weight problems, like many in this drama, was rather too pleased with his own invective, ranting about the Labour Party's "nest of vipers" and its "cesspit" of politics. Labour were like an "authoritarian junta," according to his deputy, Jim Mitchell.

It was all over the top, and so is the whole Paisley politics affair. These are little people,

and this whole business is small beer, except that, by accident, it has attracted national attention and may well affect the devolution referendum taking place on 11 September. Looking at the councillors in action, it's clear that most wouldn't have the wit to indulge in major corruption schemes. "It's an August story," says Professor Alan Alexander, of Strathclyde University, a long-time observer of Scottish local politics, "made interesting by the innumerate of the referendum."

Even some of those involved admit that the Paisley affair is really about feuding personalities. "There's no big ideological argument here," says Paul Mack, a leading player. "Many in the SNP could be in the Labour Party, or the other way round." Mr Mack was suspended by the Labour Party. He then got himself re-elected as a councillor when the official Labour candidate mysteriously withdrew, the morning nominations were due. He recently defected to the SNP benches.

Many people say the inter-necine battles started in the selection battles for two simultaneous by-elections in 1990, when Irene Adams and Gordon



Local hero: a statue of Sir Peter Coats, of the thread company J&P Coats, in the heart of Paisley
Photograph: Tom Kidd

McMaster were elected for the seats. Others, such as Mr Mack, suggest that the real war began in 1992, when Nancy Allison, the present Provost (the north-of-the-Border equivalent of mayor), was stopped from becoming provost of the now-defunct Renfrew council at the last minute, by an alliance of the opposition and some Labour councillors.

Mrs Allison is still a powerful figure. Her little gang withdrew from the day-to-day politics of the council in a sulk, and attended few meetings until its re-formation as Renfrewshire, a

more powerful council. Renfrewshire is controlled – just – by Labour. Several councillors found themselves dropped as candidates for the new authority, and the Allison faction took control.

The Allison are allied to Irene Adams, MP for Paisley North, and united in their dislike of Tommy Graham who, when it looked as if either he, Adams or McMaster would lose their seats in boundary changes, promptly set up an office in Paisley, outside his constituency. This was also the time when, mysteriously, all the inhabitants of an old people's home found themselves unwittingly signed up as Labour party members. All these carpetbagging efforts proved unnecessary when the boundary commission retained

the existing number of parliamentary seats.

There are also the usual accusations of patronage and nepotism flying around Paisley: of councillors' wives (including that of the leader, Jackie Henry) having well-paid jobs in the council, of councillors had-mouthing their rivals, and of committee chairmanships being awarded for political favours rather than on merit. Indeed, Thursday's meeting was dominated by a row over whether Harry Revie, the convenor (chairman) of property and construction, should be allowed to keep his £18,000-a-year post, given that he has been suspended by the Labour party while allegations about his role as director of a council-sponsored company, the

security firm FCB, were being investigated.

FCB is the one decent-sized potential scandal emerging in Paisley, but it has already been much investigated, with little success. It started as many such stories do, with good intentions. In the late Eighties Ferguslie Park, on the fringes of the town, was the worst area of Paisley, with a reputation for harbouring gangsters in its mean, three-story tenements. FCB was set up to create jobs in the area: the council, along with the Scottish Office and the Strathclyde Region, sank £200,000 into the project. FCB thrived for a while, but it went bust last year, and £321,336 is still unaccounted for.

According to a liquidator's report leaked to the local Paisley

Daily Express, the money was supposed to have been paid to untrained casual staff, but there are doubts as to whether these people ever existed. Mr Revie, who was also Mr Graham's election agent, denies any knowledge of the affair and seems to have had little role in the actual running of the company. As Mr McFee points out, his suitability as a director of the company, protecting the council's investment is questionable. But Mr Revie is needed to guarantee Labour's hold on the council, therefore he retained his post at Thursday's meeting.

Then there is the bogey of Militant. Mr Mack and the SNP accuse the leadership, including the Labour leader, Hugh Henry, of being Militant stooges, but there is little evidence. Mr Henry admits to having been involved in Militant in the late Eighties, but says he left long ago.

There are no heroes in this story, and the villains are pretty mild. There are no councillors swanning about in expensive cars or living in houses paid for by developers, as there has been in Doncaster, another rotten Labour borough. Take Tommy Graham, the Renfrewshire West MP who has been suspended for spreading malicious rumours about his colleagues. Senior local Labour figures are not exactly complimentary about him. "He's an arsehole and should never have been made an MP. But he's not evil," said one. Mr Graham is not accused, as originally thought, of having contributed to Mr McMaster's depression through rumour-mongering, but he did not help his own cause when he blurted out to the local evening paper that the dead MP was a drunk who consumed "doubles and doubles". As a fellow MP put it, "Tommy came up from the hard school, and he's capable of being pretty vicious when he attacks."

Mr Graham is an uninspiring but loyal Labour back, a bit of a buffoon with a sharp tongue, who has mostly toed the line, apart from indulging in the infighting which passes for politics in Renfrewshire. He weighs 20 stone, and is a constant smoker; there are fears among fellow MPs that this affair will damage his health.

Under pressure to be seen to be doing something, Labour has launched another inquiry into events in Paisley. But we have been here before. There have been half-a-dozen inquiries into FCB by agencies ranging from the Scottish Office to the Royal Bank of Scotland, in response to allegations by Mrs Adams that it has been used as a front for laundering drugs money and other criminal activity. None has so far come

up with any evidence, and the police investigation seems to have got nowhere. No one is suggesting that Mr Revie has enriched himself, but locals in Ferguslie Park are confident that someone at the company or the council has lined their pockets with the casual workers' cash.

There was, too, a Labour enquiry into Paisley in 1995. It remains unpublished, but its leaked findings bode ill for the chances of truth emerging this time. It paints a picture of a deeply divided party but concedes that much of the information supplied was "anecdotal and cannot be tested for proof". Mrs Adams's party, Paisley North, remains suspended. Her enemies suggest this has helped her, since it meant that she did not have to submit herself for re-election to her local party. A suspension of Paisley South seems inevitable, which means that the national party can impose the new MP.

All this serves the interests of New Labour, which dislikes the old west of Scotland working-class MPs: they fit as poorly on Labour's benches as into their suits. In many of the national newspapers there have been pompous calls for a major inquiry headed by a senior judge, but they have been written by leader-writers who have never been near Paisley and have little understanding of the issues. As Professor Alexander put it, "If you got a hyper-QC, what would they investigate? How do you investigate a culture? It's like nailing a hlang-mango to the wall."

There is a major issue, but it is about democracy, not corruption. The question is this: how can democracy function when the local people are prepared to elect whatever donkey is wearing the red rosette?

Labour has controlled the west of Scotland for generations. The SNP has made few inroads in urban areas, the Tories have been wiped out, the Lib Dems are, as ever, on the margins. But Labour's domination is helped by the electoral system. In Glasgow, for example, Labour has 93 per cent of the seats on 61 per cent of the vote. The argument for proportional representation is overwhelming to many, both inside and outside the party, who reckon that without it, there will be more Paisleys and Doncasters, tarnishing New Labour's image. In fact, Labour spokesmen have found a novel way to reassure referendum voters worried that their party may dominate the new, devolved legislature in Edinburgh. They point out that the proportional representation planned for that body makes it unlikely that Labour will ever have a majority there.

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karen krizanovich



There's a woman back home who replies to the shop clerk's cheery "Have a nice day" with "Don't tell me what to do." This is a global right. If she wanted to buy the local church, remodel it and then proudly announce that she is installing a black bidet in her bathroom, then it is her inalienable right to do so – to be tasteless, in other words.

Style magazines and newspapers make like they know what's in and what's out. But as the Versace knock-knock joke goes ("Knock-Knock." "Who's there?" "Versace." "Versace who?" "Ah, that's the fashion business," fashion is at best a grace note – meant to be played and then forgotten. That means everybody gets it wrong, but it doesn't matter. So here I am, as promised last week, telling you a bit about how to be cool. You can be like me – desperately trendy – if you follow these simple Trendy Rules.

1. Be there ASAP. If you haven't checked out a new place to shop, eat or be seen within four weeks of its opening, don't bother at all. You're a leader, on the cutting edge of what life's all about (which is, basically, spending more money than you make, buying stuff you don't need and wasting precious time that you will want back when you are lying on your deathbed. Honestly. If you don't have children, what else is there to do? You can only read for so long before your lips get tired.)
2. You are where you eat. All you McMuffins, out of the pool.

3. Technophobia no longer makes you seem like Holmes's Dr Watson. If you can't operate a computer, a Psion or a Swiss army knife, you should be ashamed of yourself.
4. Know the difference between old-good and new-good. For example, there is really only one palpable difference between the vulcanised fat-free muffins at the Seattle Coffee Company and those at the Beverly Hills Bakery in Knightsbridge. One delivers.
5. By the time anyone else finds out what's trendy, you've already moved on to the next trend. Why? Because a) you're a leader, b) you are insatiably curious and the credit card people keep lifting your limit, c) you are neurotic and d) you don't have a recognisable *raison d'être*.
6. Being trendy is hard work, which must look effortless. Remember key phrases, like "This old thing" when the tag is still on it.
7. Always remove the red sales stickers from the soles of your shoes.

So how cool am I? I am so cool I wear Cutler & Gross sunglasses, not the prohibitively expensive, they-saw-me-wearing Porsche spectacles. As much as I love the movie *Men In Black*, I would not dream of wearing Ray-Ban Predator 2s. Sure, they wear 'em in the film. But at the end of the movie, the cool MIB are wearing another brand. (Actually, I wouldn't touch a pair of Ray-Bans because their publicist mulishly refused to send me any freebies. She obviously

doesn't know who I am – I was in *Private Eye* once. Fie on her.)

I'm so cool I wouldn't drive a Honda – especially a free one, unlike Tara Thingle-Thingle (apparently known as the Plank). Honda? That's for people who punch a hole in the front of the microwave and continue to use it. Back home, they're for aspiring trailer trash. Betsy Joe's got one to go to her classes in How Astrology Affects Your Mascara.

I'm so cool I have to drive a car with a cool name, like the Rover Here Boy or the Saab Story. I'm against buying that car called the Prowler on principle. I can understand the Cobra (as pitted against the Scarab), or its current incarnation, the Viper. Those are race cars meant to be cherished and pampered and sold once the divorce. They're not exactly Sainsbury's parking lot cars.

Car companies have traditionally named their vehicles after animals (Puma, Mustang, Pacer), places (Granada, Capri, Blackpool), and Egyptian symbols for life (Ka) and the sport version (Ka-Si). That's OK. But who set the trend to name cars after violent perpetrators? The Prowler? What's next, the Granny Kicker? The Thug? The Munchausen Syndrome By Proxy? At this rate, both the Plank and me will be driving a Jeep Skate or a Ford Harrison – although she won't pay for hers coz she wears short skirts. Oh well.

"What are these?" Several chocolate bars are posed like bathing beauties on my friend John's coffee table. (John is a trend-monger like me.)

A trap, no doubt. They're candles. Soap. Stuck down with epoxy – anything to get me back for eating that sweetie last time. We don't have much Merano glass in Illinois but when we do, it's shaped properly, like a swan or a clown. Inedible things shouldn't pretend to be food, not with so many hungry people around.

"They're new," John gestures to the bars. "I've got all three flavours from the manufacturer. You can't buy them yet." (So I can't buy them yet but he's got them? *La-de-da*.)

"You don't like chocolate, John."

"I know." (Touche. Smug sonofagun.)

"So what do you think of the new Oasis?"

"Bored to death," he says.

"America doesn't think the V-1 shines out of their bottoms, either," I reply.

"The V-1?"

"Oh dear! You don't know, do you? It's the latest craze. Nazi Rhythmic Slang. V-1 – sum!"

"No!"

"Rudolf Hess!" I affirm. (Got him.)

One pearly Hitler Youth poking over his master race, he snarls, "If you want to win the style war, you've got to be prepared to feel the breaking wind of fashion against your cheek."

"Isn't that a misquote from Fitzgerald?" I ask.

"OK, you win."

سكرا من الاصل

obituaries / gazette

Anna Plowden

Anna Plowden was one of the foremost object conservators of her generation and made significant contributions to the techniques and practice of conservation. Her interest was not confined to her own business, but also extended into membership of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum and of various advisory bodies in the field of conservation.

She was born in 1938, the second of four children and the elder daughter of Edwin and Bridget Plowden (later Lord and Lady Plowden). She inherited from them her clarity of intelligence, her industriousness, her directness of manner, her undemonstrative but unswerving integrity, and her readiness to devote her energies with unstinting commitment to public service where she thought that there was a worthwhile contribution for her to make.

After school at New Hall, Chelmsford, she spent the academic year 1962-63 on the Diploma Course in Conservation at the Institute of Archaeology in London University, and was duly awarded her diploma. That led to a Fellowship awarded by the British School of Archaeology which made it possible for her to work on the conservation and restoration of the Nimrud Ivories in the Museum of Iraq.

In 1965, back in England, she started a one-woman freelance business in conservation, specialising in the conservation of archaeological bronzes. She was the first scientifically trained objects conservator to work in the private sector. During this time she undertook the cleaning of a set of Khmer bronze figures from Cambodia, now in the Rockefeller Museum; the removal of a wall-painting at Fort Jesus in Mombasa; the removal of wall-paintings and armorial shields from Licoia's Inn's 16th-century gatehouse, which was being demolished; and their

restoration and replacement; and the artificial salt-glazing of 5,000 bricks, in the replica building put up in its place. As if this were not enough, she became a part-time lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology, where she taught practical conservation, and the moulding and casting of archaeological artefacts.

In 1968 she established her own company, Anna Plowden Limited, specialising in the conservation and restoration of archaeological and fine art objects. A year later she began to work in conjunction with Peter Smith (R&R) Limited, and expanded the work of the company to include the conservation and restoration of all metalwork, stonework and organic materials (for example wood and leather).

The business flourished and grew, and in 1985 they formed a joint company, Plowden and Smith Limited, of which she was the Managing Director. She was a director of Recollections Limited from 1986 to 1993, and chairman of Art Services Limited from 1994 to 1997. She was also the co-author of *Looking After Antiques*, published in 1987.

Her business went through a difficult time in the recession of the early 1990s - conservation tends to be one of the casualties of recession - but she weathered that, and had the satisfaction of presiding over its return to prosperity as the economy recovered.

Anna Plowden readily responded to the demands which her success brought upon her to involve herself in public work; for example, as a Fellow of the International Institute for Conservation; chairman from 1979 to 1983 of the Conservation Committee of the Crafts Council; a member from 1987 of the Conservation Advisory Committee of the Museums and Galleries Commission; a member from 1987 of the Council of the Textile Conservation Centre; Trustee of the

Edward James Foundation from 1990, and of the St Andrew's Conservation Trust at Wells from 1987 to 1996; and from 1990 a member of the Council of the Royal Warrant Holders Association, of which she was to have become the President next year.

In 1990 the Prime Minister appointed her to be a member of the Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The V&A has a sizeable Conservation Department, extending over all the materials which feature in its collections, and it was to be expected that she would take a special and very knowledgeable interest in the work of that department. But her interest was by no means confined to conservation; she took a strong interest in, and found time to be a regular visitor to other departments as well and her observations were always extremely penetrating and to the point.

She was a very conscientious trustee: she was clearly delighted to be able to play a part in the V&A's affairs, and took a keen interest in its staff - curators, professional and technical staff and wardens alike. One of her last visits to the museum, earlier this year, was to sit in on a training event for wardens. She was the unqualified respect and affection of her colleagues on the board and of all the staff at the museum. In 1997 she was deservedly appointed CBE for her services to conservation.

Plowden was a quiet and private person, reserved and unassuming, with a detached and amused outlook on life, and on her fellow men and women. But she knew her own worth, and when she contributed to a discussion, which she did sparingly, it was because she had something relevant and useful to add to it, which her colleagues knew they would benefit from hearing. She had a great capacity for friendship, and for loyalty



Industrious and with unswerving integrity: Plowden between two red sandstone figures at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery which she restored in the late 1980s. Photograph: Mayotte Magnus

to her friends and colleagues and to the institutions in which she worked.

Anna Plowden had great inner strength, and she sustained a long illness, which involved much painful and debilitating treatment, and periods of re-

mission which were all too brief, with admirable courage and patience, with characteristic determination and, at the end, with resignation. She retained a youthful complexion and appearance, so much so that it was a surprise to know

that she was nearly 60 when she died.

Robert Armstrong
Anna Bridget Plowden, conservator: born 18 June 1938; CBE 1997; died London 21 August 1997.

Gerald McLarnon

Gerald McLarnon was a playwright who over sought popularity. Nor did he ever find it. But he knew how to make us sit up in the playhouse, which is half the battle. If he ever bothered to fight the other half, it must be because his dialogue and his characters came to him in such a vivid and baffling rush that there was no time to sit down and shape them for Shaftesbury Avenue or Broadway, Hollywood or television.

Yet directors and actors liked the sense of theatricality which pervaded his work. There was thought behind it - muddled thought maybe - but it had without doubt a stagey tang and its Celtic twist and self-conscious bournish.

McLarnon was an Ulsterman and a man of the theatre. He had known that from his youth. Not that he had ever set foot in a playhouse or inherited any theatrical connections. But the stage somehow summoned him when he was being brought up near Belfast, and he went first into the great Sir Frank Benson's company of touring Shakespeareans, then into something even better (for an Irishman), the equally great Aneurin MacMaster's roving troupe, which used to play the fit-ups in Ireland and inspired anybody who spent even the briefest time with them.

Then came a post-war stint for Hugh Hunt at the Bristol Old Vic - still as an actor, though without much success. This is when he began to write plays. McLarnon was his first title. The Arts Council gave it a prize and the Perth Repertory Theatre acted it. With religious, political, cosmic zeal he went on writing as if he were after the deepest meanings of existence while searching for a theatrical formula.

In 1953, McLarnon wrote a kind of bedroom farce, *The Wrestler's Honeycomb*, which even reached the Duchess Theatre (as *The Merry Widow*) with a largely Irish cast. It seemed to London playgoers about as tacky as a farce could get.

Yet Laurence Olivier in his managerial heyday had taken it under his wing, before getting cold feet and hiding his link with it. The play's humour existed in a famous wretched marriage before an important professional bout and attempting not to lose his virility. If the critics were not amused the audience was; but the romp remained a three-day wonder.

McLarnon had a way with words and with stage situations which might leave a critic in the dark if required to dictate an account of it within minutes of curtain fall at the Royal Exchange in Manchester - where most of his stuff was done - but kept one unexpectedly and inexpressibly alert, with the wit and the charge of the language. He had espe-

cially the gift for knowing how to seize attention, if not how to satisfy it.

They were surely not bored in Belfast in 1958, when McLarnon's next champion after Laurence Olivier - Sir Tyrone Guthrie - directed, in his exhilarated way, *The Bonfire*, a lament for Ireland's Catholic-Protestant misery in which, on 12 July of all nights of the year, a Protestant girl and a Catholic sailor try to take their lives together on a bonfire amid the hurly-burly of the Orangemen celebrating the Battle of the Boyne.

The production set Belfast in uproar. Banners of protest were unfurled; marches were provoked. Any transfer of the play to the imminent Edinburgh Festival seemed out of the question. As Guthrie himself cynically observed: "I think it is good thing it has aroused public interest."

But the play made McLarnon a force to reckon with and the critics went on plucking reckoning with his art for most of the next four decades in such plays as *The Saviour* (1967), to which the Lord Chamberlain took strong objection until its nude women were removed and the action shifted into a deconsecrated church, set somewhere off the west coast of Ireland in a quarrelsome post-nuclear society; *The Trial of Joan of Arc* (1969), in which Dilly Hamlett had an emotional ball; and assorted versions of Dostoevsky, Gogol and Sophocles, which extended McLarnon's global influence as a playwright and librettist.



McLarnon: a stagey tang

He also wrote for radio. One critic, after a deep evening's listening to one of his half-dozen plays, dithered: "Brilliant or rather silly. I couldn't decide. The programme has enough ludicrous lines to keep one listening."

Adam Benedict
Gerald McLarnon, playwright: born Clitheroe, Lancashire 16 April 1915; married 1958 Eileen Essel (one son); died London 16 August 1997.

Arthur Prysock

In the early 1950s, many Americans thought that Arthur Prysock's soothing baritone might match Billy Eckstine's in popularity, but the rock'n'roll era effectively crushed both careers. Despite many satisfying records, Prysock over fulfilled his potential and, in particular, his work is little known in the United Kingdom.

He was born in 1929 in Spartanburg, South Carolina. His brother, Wilbert, born three years earlier, learnt many instruments whilst on military service in the Second World War and later established himself as the saxophonist Red Prysock. Arthur also left home during the war years and worked repairing cars in Hartford, Connecticut. However, he soon discovered his vocal talent and began to rehearse with a pianist. He left his regular employment when a club-owner offered him \$3 a night.

In 1945, Buddy Johnson and his Walk 'Em Rhythm Orchestra visited Connecticut, but their resident male vocalist was sick. Johnson, lead Prysock sick, Johnson lead Prysock sick and immediately offered him a job. He was a member of the band for eight years, singing on several of their successful records for the US Decca label

- "They Say I'm The Biggest Fool" (1945), "Let My Love" (1947), "I Wonder Where Our Love Has Gone" (1948) and "Because" (1950).

When Johnson left Decca in 1952, Prysock remained as a solo artist. As a nod to his old friend, Johnson's greatest composition, the searing ballad "Since I Fell For You", was always part of his repertoire. His own career began well as he reached No 5 on the rhythm and blues charts with "I Didn't Sleep a Wink Last Night". But he never did as well again. His versions of "It's No Sin" and "Wheel of Fortune" were released in the UK, but the spoils went elsewhere.

By going solo, Prysock hoped to challenge Billy Eckstine as the leading black ballad singer of the day. Like Eckstine, he possessed a commanding baritone but he failed to establish his own individuality through new, well-crafted material. Eckstine was sophisticated, while one of Prysock's singles was called "Oho-Oh-Yeh!" Indeed he sometimes covered Eckstine's hits, which was scarcely a wise move. Nevertheless, readers of the *Pittsburgh Courier* voted him the Best Male Singer of 1953 ahead of such luminaries



Prysock's soothing baritone

Photograph: Billy Pierce

as Nat "King" Cole and Johnnie Ray.

Although Prysock recorded "Good Rockin' Tonight" and "I Just Want To Make Love To You", he did not want to change his style to fall in with the popularity of rock'n'roll music. On the other hand, his brother, Red, recorded a classic, honking sax album *Rock'n'Roll*. From time to time, he worked with Red in shows billed as "The Sax and the Voice".

Prysock still had his moments and a revival of the standard "The Very Thought of You" was reasonably successful in 1960, as was "I Worry About You" two years later. He moved to Old Town Records and recorded several romantic albums, including *Arthur Prysock Sings Only For You* (1961), *Coast To Coast* (1962), *Everlasting Songs for Everlasting Lovers* and *Intimately Yours* (both 1964).

In 1964, Prysock signed with the famed jazz label Verve, and made the best records of his career including *Art and Soul* (1966), *I Must Be Doing Something Right* and *This Is My Beloved* (both 1968). During this period, he also appeared at Carnegie Hall and hosted his own television show. He was teamed with Count Basie, notably for the album *Arthur Prysock/Count Basie* (1965), which featured seven saxophonists, but Basie does not even mention Prysock in his autobiography.

Prysock's deep voice was well suited to commercials and his series for Löwenbräu beer was well-known in America. He also made the charts with a narration, "A Working Man's Prayer" (1968), written by the country singer Ed Bruce. As with many black vocalists, Prysock made a country album: *Today, I Started Loving You Again* (1979).

By the 1970s, Prysock was playing cabaret and club engagements around America. In 1976, prompted by his 14-year-old daughter Janine's enthusiasm for the film *Saturday Night Fever*, he cut a disco album with Billy Paul's producer, John Davis, and the Monster Orchestra called *When Love Is*

New. The title track was a Top 10 R&B single and was followed by "I Wanta Baby" and "You Can Do It".

He returned to cabaret work, and subsequently received critical acclaim for two albums that were more in keeping with his personality, *A Rockin' Good Way* (1985) and *This Guy's In Love With You* (1986).

Arthur Prysock has left a legacy of around 500 recordings. Very few have been released on CD - nothing in the UK - and those that have are usually on compilation albums. They are waiting to be rediscovered. The first moves were made by Michael Parkinson in his *Sunday Supplement* on BBC Radio 2. He has been featuring Prysock in past months and on doubt record buyers are looking for his work in the stores. If a complete collection were to be reissued, it could be filed variously under Jazz, Blues, Easy Listening and even Country with CDs also being filed in the pockets for Count Basie and Buddy Johnson.

Spencer Leigh
Arthur Prysock, singer: born Spartanburg, South Carolina 2 January 1929; died Hamilton, Bermuda 21 June 1997.

Dora Maar

When I was a young and raw student in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and Darius Milhaud, Tony Mayer, who was then the cultural attaché to the French Embassy in London, on one of his regular visits to Paris, took me down to his crumbling chateau in Ménerbes and thence to Dora Maar's house, writes James Stevens [further

to the obituary by Michael Peppiatt, 1 August].

During the visit Maar took us, unbelievably, to her lavatory. There were some nails sticking out from the wall and wound round these nails was a linear composition in wire made Picasso himself whilst stool". She had kept this, invariable, ever since.

Births, Marriages & Deaths

BIRTHS

BELL: On 11 August, to Annie and Jonathan, a son, Louis, a brother for Roderic.

OLSEN: Kirsty and Øystein are delighted to announce the birth of their son, Angus London Olsen.

DEATHS

BALEWILL: Philip, on 21 August 1997, at home, aged 57. Private funeral. Memorial service to be arranged.

FLOWER: Anna Bridget, CBE, on 21 August 1997, daughter of Edwin and Bridget Plowden, much loved and admired by all her family and friends, especially for her courage during recent months. Funeral private. Memorial service to be arranged. Donations, if wished, to Graysclay Cancer Research Fund, St Bartholomew's Hospital, West Smithfield, London EC1A 7BE.

THOMAS: On 16 August 1997, suddenly, but peacefully, Ruth Thomas (nee Dyson), of Chichester, and formerly Dordick, much loved and missed by all her family and friends. Service to be held at Chichester Cathedral on Thursday 28 August at 11.30am. Family flowers only, donations for Muscular Dystrophy Trust or Leish Hill Musical Festival. Trust & Sons, Trellis House, Dordick RH4 2ES, telephone 01306 882266.

For Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS, telephone 0171-293 2012.

Birthdays

TODAY: Mr Richard Addis, editor, *Daily Express*, 41; Mr Greene Bowler, chief executive, Kwik Save, 60; Mr Christopher Blake, actor, 48; Mr Dale Campbell-Servoss MP, 54; Mr Geoff Capes, shot putter, 48; Sir Alan Cox, former chief executive, ASW Holdings, 61; Sir Robert Cribbton-Brown, former chairman, Rothmans International, 78; Ms Julia Drown MP, 39; Sir John Fairclough, former chief scientific adviser to the Cabinet Office, 67; Mr Alexander Gilmore, director, South West London Community Foundation, 66; Mr Roger Greenaway, popular song composer, 59; Sir John Hoskyns, chairman, Buroco Group, and EMAF, 70; Air Chief Marshal Sir Brendan Jackson, former Air Member for Supply and Organisation, Ministry of Defence, 62; Lord Kistin, life president, GPG, 83; Mr Stanley Kriehen, chartered accountant, 84; Mr Christopher Martin, Headmaster, Millfield School, 59; Mr Jim Murphy MP, 30; Dr Oona O'Neill, Principal, Newnham College, Cambridge, 56; Sir Brian Pearson, chairman, Housing Corporation, 64; Mr Bob Peck, actor, 52; Mr James Quinn, film producer and exhibitor, 78; Mr David Robb, actor, 50; Mr Willy Russell, author and playwright, 50; Sir Roy Strong, writer and historian, 62; Mr Peter Thomson, golfer, 68; Field Marshal Lord Vincent of Cobham, former chairman of Military Committee, NATO, 66; Mr Charles Wardle MP, 58; Sir Brian Young, former chairman, Christian Aid, 75.

TOMORROW: Mr Paul Barker, writer and broadcaster, 62; Vice-Admiral Sir Stephen Barham, 75; Mr Ken Blags, Headmaster, Chew Valley School, 54; Mr Alan Brooker, chairman, Kode International, 66; Miss Antonia Byatt, writer, 61; Mr Charles Causley, poet and broadcaster, 80; Mr Brian Carter MP, 59;

Mr Carlo Curley, organist, 45; Professor Terry Dowling, graphic designer and illustrator, 51; Mr Clifford Forsythe MP, 68; Sir Michael Franklin, former senior civil servant, 70; Mr Stephen Fry, actor and writer, 40; Lt-Col Sir John Johnson, former Comptroller, Lord Chamberlain's Office, 75; Mr Richard Meale, composer, 65; The Right Rev Canon Murphy O'Connor, Roman Catholic Bishop of Arundel and Brighton, 65; Sir Graham Swallow, former High Court judge, 91; Mr Sam Torrance, golfer, 46; Hugh Wright, Chief Master, King Edward's School, Birmingham, 59.

Anniversaries

TODAY: Birth: Louis XVI, King of France, 1754; Sir Henry Thomas Tizard, scientist, 1885; Leonard Constant Lambert, composer and critic, 1905; Gene Kelly (Eugene Curran Kelly), dancer and singer, 1912; Deaths: Sir William Wallace, Scottish patriot, executed 1306; George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham, assassinated by John Felton 1628; Rudolph Valentino (Rodolfo Alfonso Raffaello Pierre Filibert Guglielmi, actor, 1906; Oscar Hammond, II, lyricist, 1960. On this day Charles I of Anjou routed the German army of the Holy Roman Empire when it invaded Italy, at the Battle of Tagliacozzo, 1268; Mexico was declared to be independent, 1821; Hong Kong was taken by the British, 1843; the Albert Bridge across the Thames at Chelsea was opened, 1873; Japan declared war on Germany, 1914; John Cobb, the British motorist, drove at 368.5 mph at Bonneville Salt Flats, United States, 1929; the World Council of Churches was founded, 1948. Today is the Feast Day of Saints Aspinus and Claudius, St Eugene or Eoghan of Ardstraw, St Philip Benizi, St Rose of Lima and St Ydelf.

Lectures

TODAY: National Gallery: Rebecca Drew, "Gory Stories (iv): Giordano, Perseus Turning Pegasus and his Followers to Stone", 12pm.

Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Surreal Slights of Fancy", 1pm. British Museum: George Hart, "Artemis and the Monuments of Ephesus", 1.15pm.

TOMORROW: Tate Gallery: Laurence Bradbury, "Characteristic Features in English Art", 2.30pm.

Cosmic time and the millennium dome

faith & reason

A plastic German dome or a fibre-glass American one - was that really the most important decision for our celebration of the coming millennium?, asks Elaine Storkey.

We are apt to get time out of perspective. It can easily become a commodity, measured out with minute digital precision and for sale at the market price. A psalm in the Bible gives us a very different viewpoint. It tells us that in God's sight a thousand years are like a day that has just gone or like a watch in the night. So a generation passes like a lunch break. Five centuries becomes half a night shift. And we recognise again that beside cosmic time we are very small. We are, in the words of the Psalm of Moses, like grass that springs up now in the morning and withers by evening.

Yet the point of this recognition is not so that we see ourselves as without significance or our time as merely trivial. It is rather that, like the psalmist, we should learn to approach each day with a deeper perspective and gain a heart of wisdom. Without a sober approach to time we are likely to be foolish.

Perhaps it is this sense of time and its implications which was missing this week in Peter Mandelson's outline of the Millennium celebrations. For they seem self-evidently trapped in the values of our present era, and consequently could well be foolish. As these thousand years draw to a close Britain is producing a dome, a tent-like structure which is to be the site of a wonderful end-of-Millennium "experience". We are assured that the construction, which will still be expensive but apparently somehow not so temporary as it was going to be before the election - American fibre-glass rather than German plastic - now has the blessings and support of all the Cabinet.

It is not yet clear what the promised "experience" will turn out to be, but since the

capacity of the dome will be well below 60 million, many people will just see it on television. Supporters could of course argue that the Mandelson vision has parallels with the biblical one: a thousand years becoming a day, embodied in the tent-like structure of the pilgrim. But somehow it lacks the scope and depth which God and Moses put together.

I find it odd anyway that we should think we can commercially produce any experience appropriate for the ending of our thousand years. For these have been an amazing thousand years, from before the Norman Conquest. They have even been historically recorded, giving us access to Britain to our own long past. There have been great epochs and movements: the Norman era, the Middle Ages, Renaissance, Reformation, Enlightenment, Victorian and Modern, all bring their own character to the Millennium. Our language and literature spans vast tracts: Chaucer, Tyndale, Shakespeare, Milton, Donne, Austen, Dickens, Churchill and thousands of others spill their words into our lives

in chronicles, poetry, novels, memoirs and biography. Architecture has its own legacy: Gothic, Classical, Georgian and Victorian buildings shape our towns and cities. Through the long centuries we see the unfolding of lives, relationships, struggles, wars, politics, law, poverty, wealth, art, music, science, technology. And underlying them all is our attitude to God, our human response to the great biblical narratives in the faith and philosophy of a thousand years. Can this really all be brought to a millennium experience?

Hardly, and that is why we know that Claire Short, now silent but eloquent, was right. We would be far better spending the money on alleviating world poverty and hunger as a more effective celebration. For the real Millennium task, as set out by the Jubilee 2000 campaign, is the cancellation of the debt of the poor. These campaigners have heard the Old Testament theme of Jubilee, forgiving debt and offering hope as one of God's purposes with us. And since over the last two centuries we have often unfairly benefited from some of those very countries now in debt, it would be a fitting act of remembrance as well as of mercy. Alongside their needs the plans outlined this week seem just a little self-indulgent.

So we have these two perspectives. One puts a thousand years into an experience which has some relationship with a dome. Another involves the God who, to quote the psalmist, has been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Heeding God's call to love mercy, do justice and walk humbly must be the best way to mark the end of this millennium. And it would help us put time more soberly in the context of eternity.

business & city

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FINANCIAL JOURNAL
OF THE YEAR

BT salvages merger and saves £3.5bn

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

British Telecom yesterday salvaged its planned merger with MCI, ending weeks of mounting uncertainty, by negotiating a cut of almost £3.5bn in the purchase price for the US long-distance giant.

The talks between BT's board in London and MCI executives in the UK and US lasted until 3am yesterday morning, though both sides refused to reveal how close the companies had come to abandoning the merger, the biggest in British corporate history.

Sir Ian Vallance, BT chairman, said: "While it looked as if this partnership might not manage a rough patch of turbulence, we have been going through the fact that we have got through it was a testament to that partnership."

The deal was thrown into jeopardy after MCI's shock profit warning last month. The company predicted losses from its attack on the US phone market would double this year to \$800m (£500m).

The biggest surprise from the review was that Concert will push ahead with MCI's expansion into the \$100bn local market, though the company predicted some scope for cost savings. Timothy Price, MCI president, said speculation that the company would cut 5,000 jobs was "completely wrong."

MCI has found it much harder to break into the local phone market than it had expected. Moves by federal regulators to open the local monopoly companies to competition have become bogged down with legal challenges.

The 22 per cent cut in the merger price went much further than the 10-15 per cent predicted by most analysts and looked likely to satisfy BT's big shareholders, who were furious that the senior management had been apparently unaware of MCI's problems.

Shareholders will vote on the new terms at a second round of

extraordinary meetings by early December, delaying the completed merger by some three months to 1 January. One BT investor said: "The cynical view on the price would be that things must be very bad at MCI, but we think the new deal is good news. The credibility of BT's management has been restored."

Under the renegotiated terms, BT is paying \$18.9bn (£11.9bn) for the 80 per cent of MCI it does not own, based on yesterday's closing BT share price, a reduction of almost 22 per cent over the old deal. It values MCI at £14.8bn, down from £19.1bn.

BT's shares soared 23.5p on the news to 436p, while MCI shares, which fell 15 per cent on Thursday, were up just 1 per cent in afternoon trading.

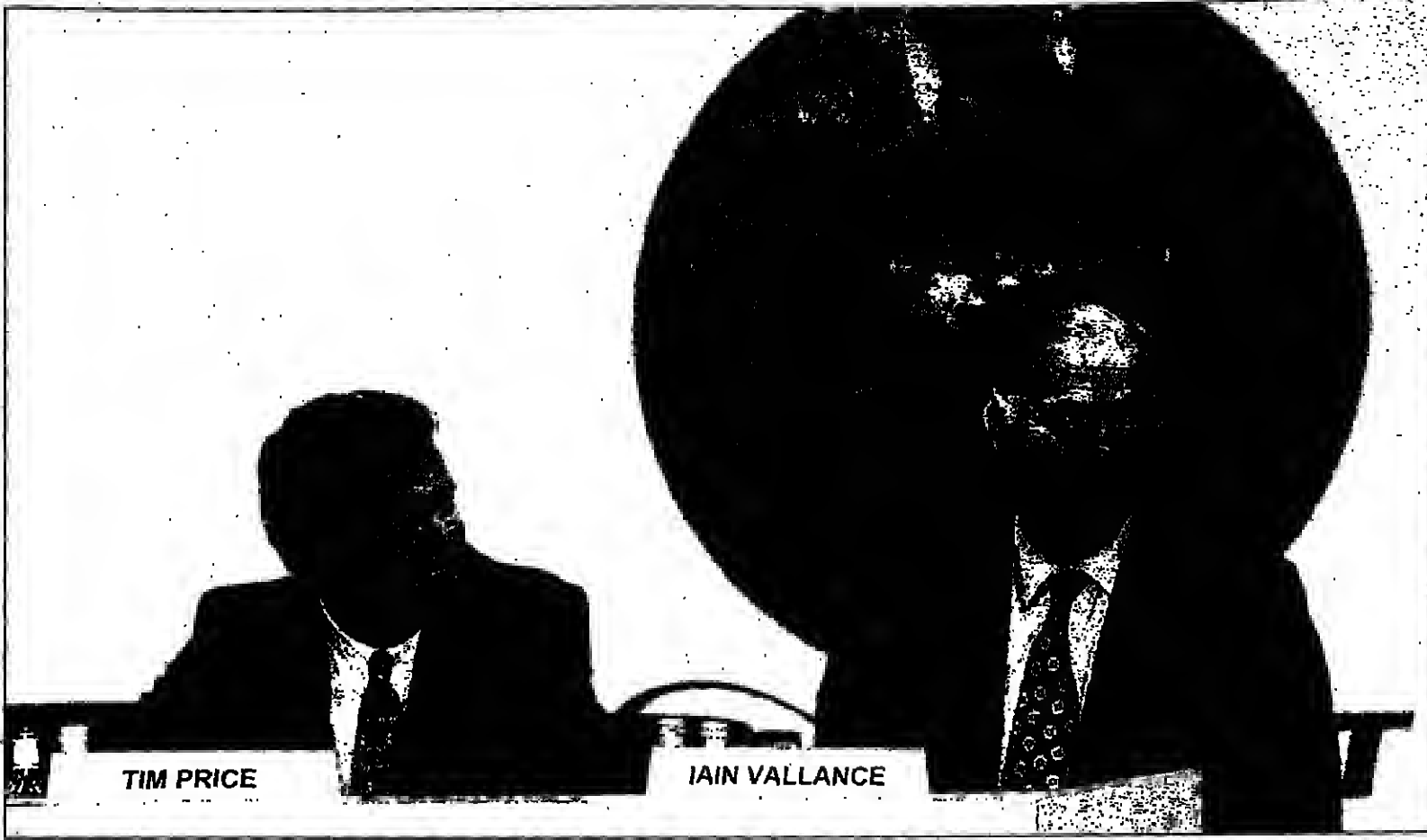
Sir Ian insisted MCI investors were not humiliated because the rise in BT shares yesterday had boosted the total value of BT's cash and shares offer. "It could well be that it is in the interests of MCI shareholders to have a smaller share of a bigger cake."

Tim Price, MCI's president, described the reduced price as a "win-win situation" for both companies. "We are excited by this deal, we are glad to have the deal back on track and we are waiting anxiously to close."

James Ross, from stockbrokers Hoare Govett, said the terms were "pretty sensible." He continued: "Of course it wasn't desirable that they got into this situation in the first place, but they seem to be back on track."

But the prolonged uncertainty since the MCI profits warning left a trail of discontent in the US, with investors who had gambled on MCI's share price nursing huge losses. Guy Wyser-Fratte, a leading US arbitrator, said BT had walked away with a bargain. "A lot of people, including some of the better US analysts, got the outcome completely wrong. BT directors let people speculate about the review for weeks. I find that absolutely appalling."

Comment, page 19



Agreed: Tim Price, MCI president (left), and Sir Ian Vallance, BT chairman, at yesterday's announcement of the amended deal

Photograph: PA

American investors left with smaller stake

MCI shareholders woke up yesterday to the gloomy prospect of a much reduced stake in Concert, the new merged company with BT, with speculation that some big US investors may consider taking legal action against the renegotiated terms, writes Chris Godsmark.

The revised agreement gives MCI shareholders fewer BT shares when the merger goes ahead, but more cash. Each MCI investor will now receive 3.75 BT shares, plus \$7.75 in cash, compared with the 5.4 BT

shares and \$6 in cash in the original proposals.

As a result, MCI shareholders will end up owning just a quarter of Concert, instead of the 34 per cent in last November's merger terms. To compensate for the loss, BT has agreed to pay out almost \$1bn (£600m) more in cash to MCI investors. Because of the revised deal, Concert will have 10 per cent fewer shares in circulation than anticipated.

But MCI shareholders were dealt a further blow, with news that they will not now begin receiving dividends from Concert until the next financial year, starting in April 1998. Under the old deal they would have been paid the final Concert dividend for the whole of 1997/98, worth a forecast 18.5p a share according to analysts.

The difference means BT will now pay out about \$630m less in dividends this year than it would otherwise have done, more than making up for the extra cash paid out through the

revised merger terms. "Let's just say the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away," one analyst said yesterday.

BT said the merger would lead of "modest" falls in its earnings this year and next year, knocking about \$90m off profits compared to if BT had stayed independent, equivalent to 1p a share.

But analysts yesterday kept their dividend forecasts unchanged yesterday, implying a yield on Concert shares of more than 5 per cent. The company

said it still intended to deliver "double digit" dividend growth in the long term.

BT also warned that the revised deal would raise its gearing - the ratio of debt to equity - from up to 90 per cent projected under the previous terms to 120 per cent. The extra debt would come not just from losses on MCI's local phone market business but also from the \$500m windfall tax bill in the UK and BT's higher pensions bill following Budget changes to tax breaks on dividends.

Appleyard shares slump as bid talks collapse

Clifford German

Shares in Appleyard, the ebullient Yorkshire-based car dealer, slumped 10.5p to 63.5p yesterday after the company announced that talks about a possible bid, first announced in June, had ended without an acceptable offer being made.

A number of parties have shown an interest in the group after a first approach from an unnamed company, believed to be Sanderson Bramall, was made public.

But Lazards, the group's advisers, took the view that none of the bidders was willing to offer a high enough price.

Appleyard is unlikely to be a hostile bid because most car manufacturers have clauses which can void existing franchises if a company changes hands. But the company, which 10 years ago was one of the strongest quoted companies in the sector, remains beset with problems.

It is still nowhere near finding a chief executive to succeed Mike Williamson, chairman and chief executive, when he gives up his executive role at the end of the year.

The business is also suffering from the widespread restructuring imposed by the leading car manufacturers which are reducing the number of franchises they deal with, amalgamating territories and demanding heavy capital investment to improve showrooms and customer service.

The main losers have been the small privately owned firms which cannot provide the necessary capital investment, but Appleyard has lost two prestigious Jaguar franchises in Leeds and Harrogate and several other outlets have been closed or sold.

The statement coincided with the release of figures for six months to the end of June showing a 3 per cent drop in turnover to £380m and a 16 per cent drop in profit before tax to just £3.88m, even including an exceptional profit of £725,000 on the disposal of dealerships.

The interim dividend is seen cut from 3.1p to 2p. The figures were marginally better than some analysts had expected, after last year's full year loss of £5.35m, which included a charge of £8.6m to cover the cost of restructuring and slimming down the business.

Millennium row as Saatchi wins £16m contract

Cathy Newman

The controversy surrounding the millennium celebrations intensified yesterday when the New Millennium Experience Company (NMEC), the group organising the festivities, awarded a £16m advertising account for the project to M&C Saatchi, one of whose partners has been advising the NMEC since February.

Bill Muirhead, a partner at M&C Saatchi, has been giving "strategic advice" to the NMEC since February.

ITV executives yesterday said that the appointment of an Independent Television Commission official to a key post at Granada Media Group could lead to a conflict of interest, writes Cathy Newman.

Virginia Lee, a senior Independent Television Commission official, has been appointed corporate affairs manager at Granada, where one of her responsibilities will be to deal with the renewal of the company's three licences.

Ms Lee has looked at licence renewal issues during her time at the Independent Television Commission. The Independent Television Commission said that, while she would not be leaving until mid-October, she would no longer be working on licence renewal for the watchdog.

NMEC, the public body set up to run the Greenwich-based millennium celebrations. Rival advertising agencies, four of which competed with M&C Saatchi for the prestigious account, have said the outcome of the bidding was a foregone conclusion.

While in opposition, Labour said it was investigating Mr Muirhead's role at NMEC. He was a key adviser to the Conservative Party during the 1992 general election, and was not interviewed for his advisory role at the NMEC.

However, a spokesman for Peter Mandelson, the minister without portfolio who is responsible for the millennium project, seemed satisfied yesterday with the appointment of M&C Saatchi. "We have nothing to add to the NMEC's announcement," he said.

A spokesman for the NMEC defended the decision: "We needed strategic advice on marketing and Bill very kindly helped us out with that. Over the last six months he has played less and less of a role."

Mr Muirhead had not been paid for his work since February, the spokesman added. "He was advising at board level, but had no formal contract or title."

Mr Muirhead could not be contacted for comment. Other agencies who pitched for the business included Abbott Mead Vickers and TBWA/Simons Palmer.

LIG gains US approval for thinner condom

Sameena Alunad

London International Group, the world's leading condom manufacturer, is poised to secure US approval for the world's first polyurethane condom. The revolutionary new prophylactic will be much thinner, helping to improve sensitivity. The group is also developing a female condom to rival the much hated Femidom product.

Commenting on LIG's fe-

male condom, which is in the early stages of development, Bill Potter, London International's scientific director said: "The concept of a female condom is of great interest to women. They want a safe method of birth control which is under their control. We are developing something with greater aesthetic appeal than Femidom."

Women have criticised Femidom, developed by US group, the Female Health Company,

for looking and feeling like a plastic bag.

The new male condom, called Durex Avanti, has double the tensile strength of conventional latex, but is 40 per cent thinner. "This condom is clear, doesn't result in allergies like latex and improves sensitivity. The biggest reason men give for not using latex condoms is that they feel like a Wellington boot," Mr Potter said.

Avanti, which has taken six

years to pass the US's stringent drug laws because of its unique material and cost £15m to develop, should go on sale in the US in the next few months and be rolled out in the UK in September. At present it can only be sold to people in the US with latex allergies, and cannot be advertised as an effective contraceptive.

Clearance by the US Food and Drug Administration is an important breakthrough for LIG.

The US condom market is worth around \$300m (£190m) a year, more than three times the size of the UK market.

Avanti will cost at least twice the price of conventional condoms in the US. Its launch in the US is an attempt by LIG to maintain its market position - Durex is number two brand in the States with a 20 per cent share, behind Carter Wallace, whose Trojan brand has 60 per cent of the US market.

Interest rate fears trigger steep falls in New York and London

Tom Stevenson
Financial Editor

Shares fell sharply on both sides of the Atlantic again yesterday on fears that US and German interest rates are about to rise. It was the third Friday in a row increasingly jittery equity markets have tumbled.

The pound also slipped further after an unexpectedly sharp rise in German import prices suggested the Bundesbank would tighten monetary policy. The continuation of Thursday's slide in the value of sterling also reflected a forecast from the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) earlier in the week that UK interest rates have moved high enough to restrain inflation.

The FTSE 100 index of leading shares was down more than 110 points at one stage on the back of another poor showing from Wall Street, which reacted

to fears that economic growth is too strong. London finally closed 76.9 lower at 4,901.1 but the Dow Jones index remained weak throughout the session.

Dealers said the fall was exaggerated by low trading volumes. They added that investors were trying to pre-empt any slump in New York on Monday when London will be closed for the bank holiday.

One of the few bright spots in the leading index was provided by BT, which closed 23.5p higher at 436p after it agreed to reduce the price it would pay for MCI by as much as 22 per cent, so salvaging the world's largest telecommunications takeover.

Smaller companies again did better, boosted in part by the weakness of the pound and by a growing belief that the second-liners represent much better value than the leading stocks that have led the market higher so

far this year. The FTSE 250 index closed 29.3 points lower at 4,658.7.

A rise in German rates as a result of higher prices would narrow the gap between the two countries' base rates, making the pound, which closed yesterday at DM2.91, relatively less attractive. German import prices surged 0.6 per cent in July and 4.2 per cent over the past year, well above analysts' forecasts of 0.2 and 3.7 per cent.

German prices were boosted in July by the strength of the dollar, which appreciated by 3.7 per cent against the mark, and by higher oil prices, which rose by 4.3 per cent on average. Together with recent comments in the Bundesbank's monthly inflation report, the data raised fears that the central bank is poised to take a more hawkish line on inflation.

Other data yesterday showed a resurgence of manufacturing

investment by British companies - in the second quarter of the year it was running 26 per cent higher than a year earlier. Economists said the increase was "staggering", showing that companies were reacting to competitive pressures and difficult trading conditions by raising investment rather than cutting it.

According to Kevin Darlington, an economist at ABN Amro Hoare Govett, the figures showed that business investment has been much more resilient than headline figures earlier in the week implied.

The Office for National Statistics also issued motor vehicle production figures yesterday, which confirmed the patchy nature of the recovery. The seasonally adjusted total car production index fell from 126 in June to 122 in July. In the six months ending in July, production fell by 7.9 per cent against the previous six months.

STOCK MARKETS									
Index	Close	Day's change	Change (%)	1996/97 High	1996/97 Low	Vol (m)	Dividend	Yield (%)	Price/earnings
FTSE 100	4978.00	+19.80	+0.4	5085.80	4058.80	3.32			
FTSE 250	4688.00	+0.90	+0.0	4729.40	4388.20	3.54			
FTSE 350	2242.00	+1.70	+0.2	2277.00	2011.90	3.36			
FTSE SmallCap	2254.99	+8.95	+0.4	2314.20	2176.25	2.16			
FTSE All-Share	2242.50	+1.75	+0.3	2378.39	1989.78	3.35			
New York	7893.85	-127.20	-1.6	8250.31	6032.94	1.69			
Tokyo	19157.12	-95.11	-0.5	20881.07	17303.85	0.611			
Hong Kong	15854.09	-201.64	-1.3	16673.27	12055.17	2.811			
Frankfurt	4283.67	+30.24	+0.7	4438.53	2848.77	1.311			

Statistics as at 21 July

Source: FT Information

INTEREST RATES									
Short sterling	UK medium gov	US long bond	3m	6m	12m	3m	6m	12m	3m
UK	7.12	7.50	7.02	7.94	7.04	7.87			
US	5.53	5.94	5.27	6.50	6.57	6.63			
Japan	0.47	0.53	2.07	3.10					
Germany	3.10	3.25	1.88	3.55	3.71				

*Bank of England

1 month 100

CURRENCIES									
£/\$	£/DM	£/¥	£/A\$	£/NZ\$	£/HK\$	£/SG\$	£/R\$	£/C\$	£/IN\$
£/\$	1.5872	-0.53c	-1.5508						
£/DM	1.8520	-0.15c	-1.8502						
£/¥	162.827	-3.31m	2.2375						
£/A\$	1.08631	-0.147	1.07915						
£/NZ\$	1.111	-0.9	94.7						
£/HK\$	7.75								
£/SG\$	1.36								
£/R\$	1.27								
£/C\$	1.33								
£/IN\$	47.8								

Source: Reuters

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JEREMY WARNER

What is BT supposed to do? Hand all its surplus capital back to shareholders and settle down to managing the decline of its own domestic business? Few managements worth the name are going to be satisfied with such a dismal task

BT seems to have got away with it, but only just

Pheh! Saved by regulators. It isn't often that Sir Iain Vallance, chairman of British Telecom, has cause to thank the watchdogs that govern his industry but on this occasion he certainly does. Rarely have investors had as close a shave as the huge overvalue BT so very nearly ended up paying for MCI of the US. But for the tardiness of the Federal Communications Commission in the US in approving the deal, the merger would have sailed through months ago on the original inflated terms.

The subsequent damage to BT shareholders, judging by yesterday's new terms, would have been £3bn to £4bn. It seems at least questionable that either Sir Iain or his chief executive, Sir Peter Bonfield, could have survived such a costly and embarrassing error of judgement.

As it is, regulators took long enough in approving the deal to allow MCI's problems both in its core long distance business and its assault on local telecoms markets in the US, fully to emerge into public view. How BT and its advisers failed to spot these difficulties at an earlier stage is another question. BT has owned 20 per cent of MCI for some years and is already represented on its board. If anyone had an insider's view of what was going on at MCI, it was BT.

Furthermore, James Dodd, senior tele-

coms analyst at Dresner Kleinwort Benson, and others, had spotted and aired in the City the potential for serious difficulties in local telecoms long before BT forced its American partners to put out that infamous profits warning.

Thankfully BT has now managed to renegotiate the terms in a way that allows holders to be satisfied all round. It was tough and go. MCI will almost certainly face a flurry of litigation in the US from angry arbitrageurs and others whose fingers have been badly burnt by the turn of events. Documents filed in connection with the takeover indicated that there was no scope for renegotiating the terms. It could also reasonably be argued that the unexpected events to hit BT since the merger was announced – the winding up of its profits and the removal of tax credits on dividends – went some way to cancelling out the deterioration in MCI's outlook.

In the end, however, a less advantageous deal for MCI was better than no deal at all. Without the prop of the BT takeover, MCI's share price would have headed a lot further south than it already has. The latest terms finally dispense with the pretence that this is a merger of equals. MCI shareholders end up with just 25 per cent of the combined company under the new offer, against more than 34 per cent under the old. The cash ele-

ment of the bid is enhanced a little, but this does no more than compensate MCI shareholders for the BT final dividend they will now not be getting.

There will be some earnings dilution next year and the remainder of this year, BT says, but thereafter the deal should begin to wash its face. In all then, BT looks to have ended up with if not quite a bargain, certainly a rather better deal than if none of this had ever happened. The bigger question raised by the debacle, however, is whether BT should be buying MCI at all.

I've always largely gone along with BT's case for the MCI takeover but there is no doubt that MCI's difficulties have raised some very pointed questions. Does BT really need to buy another commodity telephony business to further its international ambitions? After a prolonged period of spectacular growth in the US during which MCI provided the main competitive challenge to AT&T, MCI is now finding the going much tougher. Growth rates have slowed and the long distance market in the US has become very much more price competitive.

Moreover, BT already has a highly successful joint venture with MCI in the services it is most interested in developing – one-stop telecommunications for big multinational businesses. Does it really need to go the whole

hog and merge with MCI further to develop this business? Of course it doesn't. BT and MCI come at these markets from really quite different perspectives. BT is the incumbent public telephone company, attempting to defend its market position against buccannering newcomers. MCI is the very reverse. It is one of the outsiders trying to muscle in, an attacker of markets rather than a defender of them.

Sir Iain Vallance has tried to present this difference of approach and culture as a boon which will be of profound assistance to BT as it mounts its assault on Europe's newly deregulated telecommunications markets. But it could just as easily work the other way round. The two may find themselves incapable of living with each other.

Despite these doubts, this is probably still the right deal for BT to be doing. The case can be argued on a number of fronts but perhaps the most compelling is that size for the sake of it may actually count for something in these fast changing and rapidly globalising markets. What is BT supposed to do? Hand all its surplus capital back to shareholders and then simply settle down to managing the decline of its own domestic business? Few managements worth the name are going to be satisfied with such a dismal task. Combined, BT and MCI become the third

largest telecoms company in the world. Arguably, it will also be the one with the greatest international spread. The upshot is cheaper capital and an ability to take risks and seize market opportunities in a way that neither could realistically do on their own. This has been characterised by some as a thoroughly bad thing. MCI will merely end up using BT's money to advance its own uneconomic push into local US telecoms, many are warning.

But it is not really like that. Of course some of what BT and MCI do together won't work out and there will be losses that on their own neither company would find easy to justify. Some of these more risky propositions will come good, however. On balance, the greater market power that size for its own sake gives will enhance the prospects of both companies. If this were BT buying, say, a US television network, or some such other business which is seen to be converging with telecoms, then there would be obviously no room for doubt. But it is not MCI in the same business as BT. What's more it is a business where boundaries are fast breaking down.

Not everyone will be convinced by this. BT can still expect quite considerable shareholder opposition when the MCI takeover is put to the vote. Even so, at this juncture it looks as Sir Iain has got away with it after all.

Sky moves into pay-per-view pop

Cathy Newman

BSkyB will become the first broadcaster to ask viewers to pay to watch a music concert when it screens a charity event for the victims of the Mountserrat volcano next month.

News of the concert was yesterday revealed in so-called exclusive front page story in *The Sun*, the newspaper owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, the dominant shareholder in BSkyB.

Sky will put its substantial marketing budget behind the venture, which will inevitably increase its commercial profile as it seeks to introduce more pay-per-view events. It will also be able to assess how many viewers are willing to pay to watch concerts.

Sky beat the BBC, ITV and

Channel 4 to the exclusive rights to screen the concert, which will feature stars such as Eric Clapton, Elton John, Paul McCartney, Sting and Mick Hucknall.

Subscribers to the satellite broadcaster will be given eight opportunities to view the event over a four-day period, at £4.95 a time.

A spokesman for Sky said that the company was confident of a "strong interest" in the

event as tickets for the live Albert Hall concert had sold out within 90 minutes of being offered for sale.

Sky started experimenting with pay-per-view broadcasts, where subscribers pay extra to view a one-off event, last March when a boxing match between Frank Bruno and Mike Tyson drew 660,000 paying viewers.

Sky would not say yesterday how much it had bid for the Mountserrat rights, nor how

many viewers it hoped to pull in. All profits would be donated to the Mountserrat Foundation, which is offering aid to the victims of the Soufriere Volcano, the company said.

To date, Sky has confined its pay-per-view ventures to boxing, showing five bouts over the last 18 months. However, the Mountserrat concert will be the company's first foray into non-sporting events. Sky is widely expected to show films on a

pay-per-view basis at a later date. The company has had talks with Cable & Wireless Communications about launching a joint pay-per-view service, but a deal is thought to be some way off being signed.

Harvey Goldsmith CBE, promoter of music for Mountserrat, said Sky had come up with the "best opportunity" to raise the most money. He said that all terrestrial television companies, except Channel 5, had pitched for the rights. Mr Goldsmith added he was confident Sky would deliver a large audience.

Sir George Martin, formerly the Beatles' producer, owns a studio on Mountserrat and is producing and organising the concert. He said the event would raise much needed cash for the victims and would bring the disaster into the public eye.



How the Sun broke the news of BSkyB's latest venture into pay-per-view TV

Rivals dig in for quarry bid battle

Sameera Ahmed

A David and Goliath bid battle is brewing in the world of stone quarrying. The fight is over Bruncliffe Aggregates, a small quarrying company, which yesterday agreed an all-share offer from Ennstone, a tiny stone company, valuing Bruncliffe at £26.2m.

Though Ennstone has already secured 50.9 per cent of Bruncliffe's shares including its own stake, Aggregate Industries, its much larger quarrying rival, was yesterday locked in meetings to decide whether to launch a bid. Aggregate Industries has built a 22.7 per cent stake in Bruncliffe. Capitalised at £600m against Ennstone's £17m, Aggregate clearly has the firepower to launch a much bigger offer. However, although Bruncliffe is thought to have repeatedly courted a full bid and Ennstone has had talks to persuade the company to sell its stake, Aggregate has taken no action.

Vaughan McLeod, chairman of Ennstone, which is raising £2.5m in a placing to help fund the deal, said he was puzzled about why Aggregate had not bid for Bruncliffe, but was confident about the outcome for his own shareholders. "We own 9.4 per cent of Bruncliffe. If Aggregate outbids us we will make a profit," he said that Aggregate would be under pressure to raise the stakes or sell up. "Doing nothing could give them a very big stake of a delisted company."

Juicy service contracts could see Bruncliffe's three top directors sharing around £1.5m following a bid. Bruncliffe's shares rose 2.5p to 41.5p, compared to the 48.75p bid price.

IN BRIEF

Huntingdon chief quits animal committee

A senior director at Huntingdon Life Sciences, the animal testing company at the centre of a Home Office investigation into animal cruelty, has resigned from an independent board which advises the Home Office on animal protection. Dr David Christopher, Huntingdon's research laboratories director, has stepped down from the Animal Procedures Committee, a body of 19 people which advises the Home Office on science, industry and animal protection. Dr Christopher has been under pressure from animal rights groups to resign after the Home Office threatened to revoke Huntingdon's licence after it upheld allegations of animal mistreatment exposed in a Channel 4 documentary earlier this year. A spokeswoman for the National Anti-Vivisection Society said yesterday: "He has finally bowed to pressure. His position was untenable." Dr Christopher is believed to be on an extended holiday and was unavailable for comment.

Saracen expects offer for Value Trust

Saracen Value Trust says it has held meetings with interested parties which could lead to an offer for the trust. MAM and Invesco are understood to be candidates, and Saracen expects to make an announcement within the next 10 days. The Trust said HSBC Asset Management Europe has written a further letter to the board but has not submitted new and improved proposals. HSBC proposed two weeks ago to remove the board of Saracen and the investment manager and to take over management of the trust.

£500,000 pay-off for Asda Property MD

Asda Property, the property investor, paid Tony Roscoe nearly £500,000 in severance pay after the company sacked him as managing director in March. Far higher than the £300,000 observers assumed at the time. Patrick Ranger, property director, said that no replacement for Mr Roscoe had yet been selected, but that he expected headhunters to have a shortlist for the company by next month. Mr Roscoe left after disagreements with Manny Davidson, the chairman, whose family owns most of the company. The group also announced flat profits of £5.06m for the six months to June. Earnings per share rose to 3.9p from 3.3p, and the interim dividend was 0.9 p against 0.85p.

Bass sells interests in Carlsberg-Tetley

Bass, the brewing and leisure group, has exercised and completed its option to sell all of its interests in brewer Carlsberg-Tetley to Denmark's Carlsberg for £110m in cash. Bass exercised the option following a decision by Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, to block its proposed merger with Carlsberg-Tetley. Under the terms of the merger agreement signed between Bass and Allied Domecq in 1996, Bass said it had also asked Allied to return £30m paid by Bass for Allied's stake in Carlsberg-Tetley.

Vaux sell hotels and nursing homes

Vaux Group has sold five three-star Swallow Hotels comprising 385 bedrooms to Chasley Lifestyle and has also completed the sale of all 38 nursing homes to Highfield Group, for a total of £48m. The company said the proceeds would be invested in hotels, pubs and brewing. The sale will also enable Swallow to proceed with a project to install air conditioning in a significant proportion of the rooms in each hotel by September 1999. New pubs are either under construction or planned in the city centres of Nottingham, Sheffield, Middlesbrough and Halifax.

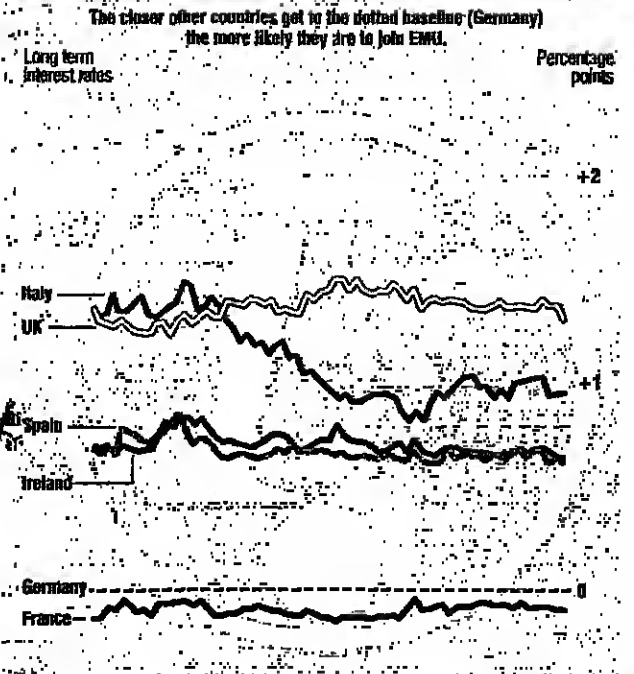
Graphics deal boosts VideoLogic

VideoLogic said graphics seller Matrox Graphics has signed a strategic alliance with NEC Electronics for the supply of high-performance 3D graphics processors for the supply of VideoLogic and NEC. The first product will be the new Matrox m3D, a graphics board based on the latest NEC PowerVR PCX2 3D processor. The Matrox m3D would be shipping in the fourth quarter of 1997 and available world-wide, VideoLogic said. The shares rose 10.5p to 64.5p.

Calidore pays £3.58m for Keystone

Calidore Group has agreed to buy the whole of the issued share capital of Keystone Solutions for £3.58m, with further payments depending on Calidore's profit performance over the next three years. Calidore is also proposing to consolidate its ordinary shares on a one-for-20 basis and has placed new ordinary shares at 90p per share to raise £1.5m for the development of the Keystone business, which develops software for legal and accountancy firms.

Who will be in EMU? The financial markets' view



TOWARDS EMU: If the line moves towards the German base line it means investors no longer regard such a high position for holding that country's bonds compared to German ones, because they are confident the currency won't devalue against the Mark. In other words, they think that country will be locked into a single currency with Germany in ten years' time.

AWAY FROM EMU: However, if they think the country won't be in EMU, that it will have higher inflation, and that there is a risk of a future devaluation against the Mark, then they will demand an early premium for holding that country's bonds, so the line will move away from the base.

When will EMU start? The City Analysts' View

The independent analyst from: Nikko Europe, Paine Webber, ABN Amro, JP Morgan, Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, Salomon Brothers, Goldman Sachs, HSBC, James Capel, UBS

what probability they place on EMU starting in 1999

Probability EMU starts on time	55%	(52% last week)
Probability EMU is delayed	32%	(32% last week)
Probability EMU never happens	3%	(16% last week)

Markets wary of German inflation

Clifford German

For the second week running the experts have left their forecasts of the probability of EMU going ahead unchanged. However, currency markets yesterday reflected concern at the prospect of stronger inflation in Germany following higher preliminary figures for August from north-Rhine Westphalia and Bavaria.

Indications that German inflation rates could climb back up to 2 per cent could trigger a rise in the Bundesbank's repo rate as early as next Tuesday.

Attention will then switch to the next round of meetings between the French and German governments, says Alison Cottrell at Paine Webber.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Prime Minister Lionel Jospin met in Bonn next Thursday but no decisions of substance are expected at that stage.

The European Union's finance ministers and central bankers will take their discussions forward when they meet at Mondorf in Luxembourg on 12-14 September. The Franco-German summit will follow on 13-15 September, bringing together the heads of state for a discussion on the timing of the moves towards monetary union and any changes to budgetary policies the leading candidate countries may need to make to ensure they meet the criteria.

Monument bullish on Asian oil plan

John Willcock

Monument Oil & Gas, the independent oil company, yesterday said its plans to explore and export oil from Turkmenistan, a country bordering Iran and the Caspian Sea, were progressing well.

However, shares in the group eased 0.75p to 85.25p as the group reported weaker-than-expected half-year results.

Ian Craven Walker, Monument's chairman, said talks were going well with the government of Turkmenistan and Mobil over a drilling venture that is already yielding 1,000 barrels of light oil a day. "Field operations have commenced in Turkmenistan and we hope to reach an early conclusion to negotiations aimed at increasing our investment in the region," Mr Craven Walker said.

The group announced operating profits up 134 per cent to £15.4m for the half-year to 30 June. There was a smaller increase in profits after tax of 15 per cent to £7.9m, reflecting the fact that Monument stopped capitalising interest on its new development in Liverpool Bay.

Monument also said it had two significant initiatives planned for Algeria and Pakistan in the second half of 1997.

"The figures were just a bit weaker than expected, but the shares came off ahead of the results," said one market-maker.

John Besant-Jones, an analyst with ABN Amro Hoare Govett, said the figures were "probably a little disappointing" although he added the start-up costs at Liverpool Bay made it difficult to judge. The statement on the Turkmenistan talks was "quite positive for the shares".

Congressmen threaten BA deal

Chris Godsmark Business Correspondent

The controversial planned alliance between British Airways and American Airlines came under further pressure yesterday when the European Commission revealed that US Congressional representatives investigating the tie-up shared the same competition fears.

Karel van Miert, the European Competition Commissioner, met the Congressional delegation in Brussels yesterday

and said afterwards that both teams had "common ground" on the alliance.

The Commission is thought to be calling on British Airways to give up 350 of its lucrative take-off and landing slots at Heathrow Airport as condition for the alliance going ahead.

The months of horse-trading over the deal, including regulators in London, Washington and Brussels, have increasingly focused on whether BA will be able to receive financial compensation for any slots divested.

Boh Ayling, BA's chief executive, wants to be able to sell the slots to other carriers, though the Commission is split on the issue of slot sales.

Mr Van Miert is also understood to be concerned that the alliance partners reduce flight frequencies between some transatlantic destinations.

The tie-up would give BA and American Airlines some 60 per cent of UK-US flights and has already attracted huge opposition from rival airlines in the US and Europe.

Foreign Exchange Rates as at 21/8/97

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	D-Mark
US	1.5872	22.20	62.50	1000
Canada	2.1440	71.00	203.20	1334.90
Germany	3.5227	97.80	288.20	1842.10
France	3.8550	340.20	520.80	6259.90
Italy	2.8510	12.14	18.07	1796.22
Spain	16.513	104.10	307.30	1758.00
UK	1.4980	35.31	105.70	1028.22
Belgium	60.400	21.15	59.51	39.558
Denmark	114.540	240.20	370.80	178.74
Netherlands	3.2027	105.56	316.30	2075.5
Sweden	10.940	12.20	22.15	160.00
Norway	12.590	360.20	560.80	7895.0
Switzerland	2.4020	114.70	342.30	1530.0
Australia	2.1240	39.34	125.10	1230.0
Hong Kong	4.2020	29.30	87.10	73.30
New Zealand	2.4790	29.30	87.10	130.0
Saudi Arabia	1.5532	27.30	82.10	7.4
Singapore	2.3710	49.44	145.00	19.15

Forward rates quoted low to high are at a discount; subject from spot rate

*Dollar rates quoted as reciprocals

**For the latest foreign exchange rates call 0801 123 3033

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Interest Rates as at 21/8/97

Country	Rate	Yield	1yr	3yr	5yr	10yr	15yr	20yr
US	7.00%	7.00%	7.00%	7.00%	7.00%	7.00%	7.00%	7.00%
UK	6.75%	6.75%	6.75%	6.75%	6.75%	6.75%	6.75%	6.75%
Germany	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
France	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%	5.50%
Italy	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%
Spain	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%
Belgium	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%
Netherlands	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%
Sweden	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%
Norway	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%
Switzerland	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%
Australia	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%
New Zealand	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%
Saudi Arabia	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%
Singapore	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%	6.00%

Money Market Rates as at 21/8/97

Overnight 7 Day 1 Month 3 Months 6 Months 1 Year

Interbank 5% 7% 7% 7% 7% 7% 7%

Local Authority 5% 7% 7% 7% 7% 7% 7%

Local Authority 5% 7% 7% 7% 7% 7% 7%

Treasury Bill (91d) 5% 7% 7% 7% 7% 7% 7%

Dollar 5% 7% 7% 7% 7% 7% 7%

ECU 5% 7% 7% 7% 7% 7% 7%

Life Financial Futures as at 21/8/97

Contract	Settlement	High/Low	Open	Close
Long GB	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Short GB	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Long US	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Short US	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Long Japan	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Short Japan	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Long Australia	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Short Australia	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Long New Zealand	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Short New Zealand	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Long South Africa	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Short South Africa	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Long Hong Kong	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Short Hong Kong	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Long Singapore	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20
Short Singapore	114.30	114.20	114.20	114.20

Life FTSE 100 Index Option as at 21/8/97

Settlement price: 4878 closing price: 4880

Series: 4880 4880 4880 4880 4880 4880 4880 4880 4880 4880

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Nov 4880 4880 4880 4880 4880 4880 4880 4880 4880 4880

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Invasion of the entertainers

Wood's head up at Stoop

It would not be before time.

Five culture shocks for the new season

5 Wales at Wembley. Even stranger, in many ways. The red dragon will be breathing fire over the twin towers when Scotland and France make their biennial Five Nations treks in the new year. Still, the Welsh could hardly be less successful in London than they have been in Cardiff, could they?

CLUB-BY-CLUB GUIDE TO THE ALLIED DUNBAR PREMIERSHIP

[illegible]

WEEKEND FIXTURE GUIDE

[illegible]

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sport

Wright a model for modern striker

Ian Wright needs two goals to eclipse Cliff Bastin's 58-year scoring record for Arsenal. Glenn Moore looks at the art of scoring and the Gunners striker's place in the pantheon of hit men

The goalscorer of the week, Germany's Oliver Bierhoff, said after his five-minute hat-trick against Northern Ireland that his art was simply a case of "closing your eyes and whacking that ball".

Jürgen Klinsmann took a more considered line. "Goalscoring has to be within you but, while it is a natural talent, it has to be developed and nourished with a lot of work," Ian Wright, who hopes to overhaul Cliff Bastin's 58-year-old Arsenal goalscoring record at Southampton today, is inclined towards the latter view. Always a natural goalscorer, even while playing amateur football in south-east London, he has refined his skill as a professional, learning much from partners like Mark Bright, Alan Smith and Dennis Bergkamp.

Goalscorers are the glory boys, the ones with the highest transfer fees, highest wages and highest profiles. Team-mates may sometimes resent this but they know they cannot do without them. Ronnie Moore, newly installed at Rotherham, echoed the lament of managers everywhere when he said on the season's eve, "we could do with a 20-goal-a-season striker."

There are not many about. In England only eight players have scored 20 goals in each of the last two seasons: Wright, Alan Shearer, Les Ferdinand, Robbie Fowler, Dwight Yorke, John Aldridge, Shaun Goater and Kyle Lethbridge. Look back four seasons and all but Shearer, Wright and Aldridge have dropped out. Only Wright has scored 20 goals in each of the last seven seasons.

Wright's obvious physical



TOP 10 CURRENT SCORERS
(Premiership and Nationwide Leagues)
(Goals and appearances for all clubs)

Rank	Player	Goals	Appearances
1	Alan Shearer (Blackburn)	24	32
2	Les Ferdinand (Sheff Wed)	22	32
3	Robbie Fowler (Sheff Wed)	22	32
4	John Aldridge (Sheff Wed)	22	32
5	Glenn Hoddle (Sheff Wed)	22	32
6	David Hirst (Sheff Wed)	22	32
7	David James (Sheff Wed)	22	32
8	David Hirst (Sheff Wed)	22	32
9	David Hirst (Sheff Wed)	22	32
10	David Hirst (Sheff Wed)	22	32

IN A LEAGUE OF THEIR OWN

How the Premier League and the current league scorers compare with their current leading rivals

Player	Goals	Appearances	Goals per game
Alan Shearer (Blackburn)	24	32	0.75
Les Ferdinand (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
Robbie Fowler (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
John Aldridge (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
Glenn Hoddle (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
David Hirst (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
David James (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
David Hirst (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
David Hirst (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
David Hirst (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69

HOW MANY OF TODAY'S LEADING STRIKERS

Could overtake Cliff Bastin's 58-year-old Arsenal goalscoring record

Player	Goals	Appearances	Goals per game
Alan Shearer (Blackburn)	24	32	0.75
Les Ferdinand (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
Robbie Fowler (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
John Aldridge (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
Glenn Hoddle (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
David Hirst (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
David James (Sheff Wed)	22	32	0.69
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AND THE MOST PROMISING SCORER OF THEM ALL

League goals and appearances

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Statistics: Henry Brown

Photographs: Ian Wright (Allsport); Cliff Bastin (Hulton Getty)

quality is his pace, others, like Ferdinand, have great heading ability while Ronaldo has supreme ball control. Some, like Aldridge, have none of those aspects in abundance but are gifted at simply being in the right place at the right time. "It's all about movement in the box, getting away from your marker," he said, adding: "It's a matter of instinct."

Consistent goalscorers are cool finishers with a range of executions. They are usually mentally and physically strong and brave with plenty of confidence. They are also, admits Wright, selfish. In his recent autobiography, Wright owned up to the

greediness required. "I have never seen a top striker who has not had the selfish streak in him," he wrote. "Anybody who plays up front and says they're happy to see the team win even if they don't score is a liar. Sometimes you say that because you don't want your don't want a big-headed image but deep in your heart you know it's rubbish. I'm desperate for goals: they're what my job is all about, and if I'm not scoring - even if the team is winning - I sulk."

This is a lot more believable than Shearer's refrain, "as long as the team wins I don't care who scores" but it does create problems. Smith, Wright's first part-

ner at Highbury, said this week "it isn't easy for partners to develop a two-way relationship since whenever he gets the ball near goal only white posts, not team-mates, come into focus. It is hard to argue with this approach when you consider his record. With 177 goals for Crystal Palace in all competitions, Wright is one short of Bastin's total, set in 1939, and way ahead on strike-rate. This might be expected since Bastin was a winger but, of all Arsenal's established forwards, only Ted Drake scored his goals more quickly. Drake scored 139 goals at one every 1.32 games,

Wright's Arsenal goals have come in 265 games, one every 1.5 games (a strike-rate of 0.67). Given the difficulty of scoring goals in the modern era it could be argued that Wright's achievement is the greater even if he has had more competitions to score in. Sixty years ago defences were far less organised, goalkeepers less protected and midfielders not often inclined to track back. The balls and equipment were much heavier and more cumbersome but that also applied to defenders.

On the other hand the game was more physical and medical knowledge less advanced. Dixie Dean, who scored a record

60 League goals in 1927-28, even lost a testicle from a defender's boot and Brian Clough's career was finished by a cruciate ligament injury similar to those Shearer and Paul Gascoigne have recovered from. "I accept the game is quicker now but it was bloody hard physically when I was a centre-forward," Clough said a couple of years ago. "You'd get whacked from behind and never get a free-kick."

Such is Clough's reputation as a manager it is often overlooked that he has the best post-war goal ratio of any striker. Playing for Middlesbrough and Sunderland mainly in the old

Second Division he scored 267 goals in 296 games, a strike-rate of 0.9 (a goal every 1.1 games). Unsurprisingly, he was very single-minded. At Middlesbrough his manager, Bob Denison, told him "there has been a complaint from one of the lads that you yell 'give it to me' every time he gets the ball, even when he has the chance of a shot. Why?" Clough replied "Because I'm better at it than he is."

Clough's record is just ahead of Dean who, playing mainly in the old First Division for Everton, scored 408 League and cup goals at one every 1.15 games. By way of comparison, Ian Rush's 366 goals have come at

one every two games and Gary Lineker was only marginally better. Those figures make Wright's record with Arsenal even more impressive, but while he accepts his team-mates have also played a big part they are not getting much of a mention. However, as forwards get the blame when they are not scoring they may as well accept the glory when they do. As Klinsmann, 11 and a half hours without an international goal, reflected this week: "People expect goals from me but forwards need help from others, in some games I have not had one chance."

Wing wonder Bastin converted master tactics into goals

When Cliff Bastin died, aged 79, in 1991, obituaries touched on the key role he had in the application of an innovative strategy that established Arsenal at the forefront of English football.

It must be difficult for supporters today to imagine a method that required wingers to figure regularly on the score sheet, but in the 1932-33 season alone Bastin and Joe Hulme got 53 of 118 goals that brought Arsenal the second of five championships in eight seasons.

Devised by one of the game's great thinkers, Herbert Chapman, who became manager in 1925 after leading Huddersfield to three successive championships, Arsenal's style proved almost unstoppable. Credit

with introducing the "stopper" centre-half, Chapman built on his theory that a team can see too much of the ball. Arsenal sucked in the opposition and then launched devastating counter-attacks.

The master-stroke in this was Chapman's conversion of Alex James from the dribbling inside-forward he had been at Preston to an artful midfielder provider for Arsenal's raiders. Nobody benefited more from the Scottish international's quick thinking than Bastin, who was only 16 when Arsenal spotted him playing for Exeter City at Watford.

The journalist and broadcaster George Allison, who became Arsenal's manager on Chapman's death in 1934, was a director when Bastin

first came to the club's attention. In an autobiography, published in 1948, Allison wrote: "The day Herbert Chapman and I set out for Watford [to watch a Watford player] was one of the luckiest days in Arsenal's history... our attention began to be riveted by one of the Exeter players. He was a pink-cheeked, fair-haired, stockily built youngster, whose appearance suggested that he should have been playing in a school team rather than with seasoned professionals. We had heard whispers of him before, but in football one hears many whispers concerning boy wonders, and we had not then given him serious thought. Now, after 20 minutes, he was the one player on the field in whom we had any

interest. Our one thought was: How can we get this lad for Arsenal?"

His mind made up, Chapman spoke to Exeter about Bastin immediately the game was over. It was agreed that he would join Arsenal for £2,000 on his 17th birthday, the minimum age for a boy turning professional. The transfer was completed in 1929 and by his 21st birthday Bastin had won all the honours then available: championship and FA Cup winners medals and, in

1932, the first of 21 England caps. Probably, as a boy, I saw Bastin turn out in war-time football, but I don't remember anything about him. However, one summer during that time I spent a holiday on a farm in Essex, close to Shoeburyness where James was stationed in the Royal Artillery. He came frequently to the farm and sometimes people about the place persuaded him to speak about football. One of the things I remember him telling them was that Bastin suffered from deafness. Another was that Arsenal's system meant that Bastin did not have what was known in those days as a partner: no inside-left, because James operated from a deep position. Because there is no visual evidence

and the players involved are long gone, we are left to imagine how Arsenal's attacks in the early and mid-1930s were built and carried out. Bastin and Hulme wide, Jack Lambert, later replaced by Ted Drake, a force through the middle; James deep, the other inside-forward to begin with David Jack, then Ray Bowden - an attacking auxiliary.

Leaving Bastin without support on his side of the field might have caused problems for other teams but for Arsenal it was encouraging to expand their attacking options. Many of their goals resulted from two passes, James to Hulme, and a centre to Bastin. The tough Yorkshire miner Wilf Copping, recruited from Leeds to stiffen Arsenal's midfield,

spoke of James hitting long diagonal passes that Bastin would collect at speed when coming across the front of opposing right-backs. "Alex often didn't try to pass inside the full-back over his head or to Cliff's feet. He'd drive the ball straight at him. An unexpected move it made Cliff very difficult to mark and brought him many goals. He had a tremendous shot and could be relied on to hit the target."

Bastin's marvellous career was foreshortened by worsening deafness and knee injuries. He retired with that record of 178 Arsenal goals but is no other comparison between them. Bastin was not the last of the goalscoring wingers but by all accounts there were none better.

"In France we have spectators, not fans," as the great Platini once said. Spot on, Michel. No matter what particular charms the game there may offer, it remains largely a passive rather than a passion. No witty chanting from the stands, no overnight queuing for the new club shirt - and inflatable bananas? It just never happens in France.

So what's the appeal? If you're after pure entertainment, try French football: nowhere else in the world will a beautifully executed, but ultimately ineffective back-heel be cheered with such fervour. The fans - sorry, spectators - demand a bit of finesse, a touch of style and chic. What about the three points? Yes, they matter, but victory often appears an afterthought. Le beau jeu is a precious gift and the French certainly know how to savour it.

The 1980s was French football's glamour period and I fell for it big time. Glossy pre-season guides adorned the newsagents' shelves, reams of daily analysis filled the pages of *L'Equipe* - this was real-life show business. French football provided a glorious cocktail of famous international footballers like Enzo Francescoli and Clive Allen, endless lavish spending sprees and insatiable media-monster presidents like Claude Bezz (owner of the world's largest moustache) at Bordeaux and the great

good ideas. They invented all the major competitions - the World Cup, the European Championship, the European Cup - and saw the value of investing good money and quality coaching in youth policies decades before their British neighbours. Nantes alone, for example, have bred world-class stars like Deschamps, Desailly, Karembeu and Loko while Auxerre gave the world Basile Boli and Eric Cantona (and the coach is a bit of a nutter, too).

And when it comes to foreign imports, French clubs have always made the most of their colonial ties by recruiting raw talent from Africa. Excessive fees for *Serie A* cast-offs is not part of the French way; uncovering treasures like George Weah and Jappet N'Doram is much more their style.

All eyes shall turn towards France next summer when they stage the World Cup extravaganza. The stadiums have been beautifully renovated and are ready to welcome the people of the world - but can France win the tournament for the first time? The national coach, Aimé Jacquet, is under heavy pressure to create a classy team capable of competing with Brazil, Italy and the rest - but let's be honest, it doesn't really matter. Just give us a few nifty tricks and flicks and we'll be happy. After all, why change the habits of a lifetime?

In fact, the French are full of

France by James Eastham

Bernard Tapie at Marseilles. For me, Tapie was the king. This quick-talking, money-spinning entrepreneur built the finest team in French football history - remember Waddle, Papin, Abedi Pele? - which twice destroyed the mighty Milan and captured the imagination of a notoriously fickle public. Le Midi went mad and Big Bernard was on his way to world domination.

But it was soon all over. We watched in shock as the Marseilles bubble burst and out spewed the horrifying truth: a 1990s bribery scandal which revealed corruption on a vast scale. Tapie was rotten to the core, a triathlete par excellence who left a hollow, shameful feeling in the heart of all his worshippers - but hey, what a cracking ride we'd had following his bogus dream.

Gone now are the days of wild, wand-waving antics: all financial matters are controlled by an independent body in order to avoid the debt-ridden days of torture suffered in recent seasons. Not a bad idea, actually - might we see the nouveau riche Premiership boys adopt a similar scheme soon?

In fact, the French are full of

MAJOR WEEKEND FOOTBALL FIXTURES AND POOLS CHECK

TODAY		20th August		21st August		22nd August	
Blackburn v Liverpool	20.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00
Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00
Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00
Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00
Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00	Sheff Wed v Arsenal	15.00

150 من الامارات

It often pays to stick with the devil you know even if the devils you know are close to drawing their footballing pensions

The prefix "canary", as applied to Kenny Dalglish, has become one of football's most enduring clichés, and Dalglish's dabbings in the transfer market this week suggest that it's also one of the most convincing. It doesn't take a genius to work out that a 36,000 full house every match (and a waiting list as long as the proverbial arm), a wealthy benefactor with his fingers in most of the pies in the North-east, and an income of over £13m generated from the recent sale of players, all adds up to a healthy bank balance.

Which must mean that, despite the apparently tight financial constraints placed on the football club by the plc, Dalglish has a few bob to rub together. Yet, in his attempt to do what not even "the Messiah" has managed to do for 71 years – bring the championship to St James' Park – Dalglish has gone back to Liv-

erpool and recruited two members of the Anfield old guard, Ian Rush and John Barnes, combined age: 68; combined transfer fee: £0. But then Dalglish knows a thing or two about signing players to win championships, and anyway, he may well have a point (although he'll need at least 75 to win it). Which is that, for all the air miles clocked up during the close season by managers who returned from far flung destinations (i.e. Scandinavia) with the latest "for or from in low, the reality is that it often pays to stick with the devil you know rather than the devil you haven't really got a clue about, and who could end up costing you an arm and a leg and giving you a sore head in return.

Even if the devils you know are close to drawing their footballing pensions, and couldn't get into the

first teams at Liverpool and Leeds respectively. Look, for example, at Blackburn's Roy Hodgson, who says he "won't be buying any players I don't know, now or in the future", except Edward Park to be brimming with ex-Inter Milan, Switzerland and Bristol City stars by the year 2000. Look, too, at Wim Jansen, whose two major recruits at Celtic have been his former Feyenoord charges Henrik Larsson and Regi Blinker.

Thing is, being a football manager is such a precarious job that you can't really blame those who play it safe. Howard Wilkinson once claimed that "there are only two types of managers: those who've been sacked, and those who'll be sacked in the future"; and it was Wilkinson who, as manager of Leeds, went back to his old club Sheffield Wednesday

Olivia Blair



ON SATURDAY

and relieved them of £1.75m worth of "talent" in Lee Chapman, Nigel Worthington, John Pemberton and Ben Newson.

But Wilko's favouritism pales into insignificance compared to that shown by Roo Atkinson to Kevin

Richardson, who is perhaps the palest, skinniest player ever to have played professional football. Cynics will claim BFR's aim was to portray himself as more tanned and omnipotent than he actually is by ensuring Richardson was his constant companion, although the man himself will tell you it was that sweet left foot that did the trick. Whatever the reason, wherever BFR went (to Real Sociedad, Aston Villa and Coventry) Richardson was sure to go too.

Quite what Dave "Route One" Bassett saw in Glyn "oo the deck" Hodges is more of a mystery, yet Bassett signed Hodges for Wimbledon, Watford and Sheffield United. Ditto Graham Taylor's preoccupation with Tony Daley. Having already – inexplicably – launched Daley's brief England career, Taylor went back to Aston Villa to sign the winger for

Wolves, where he's been equally ineffective. It must have been something in the hair.

Graeme Souness' bond with Barry Venison is more understandable. See, Souness has always been an image man and let's face it, anyone's going to look good alongside Eazza Venison in post-match press conferences. So having had first hand experience of Bazza's dress sense at Liverpool, Souness lured him to Turkey when he took over at Galatasaray, then rescued him when he got the Southampton job.

Gerry Francis' favourite pastime used to be signing his old Bristol Rovers protégés while Mark McGhee is another who has an unhealthy tendency for renewing old playing acquaintances (the fans won't have anything to do with him) from his Reading and Leicester days.

But none of these liaisons are as unfathomable as that between Terry Hurlock and Ian Brannfoot, who signed the volatile midfielder three times: for Reading, Southampton and Fulham. Dalglish's new signings should make one of an impact, even if the once prolific Rush managed a paltry three goals last season, and the highlight of Barnes' season was that speculative skimmer against Southampton. But if anyone doubts Dalglish's judgment, they'd be as well to recall that Brian Clough, when he became Nottingham Forest manager in 1975, signed some of the players – John McGovern, John O'Hara and Archie Gemmill – who had helped him win the title with Derby in 1972. There was nothing sentimental about it: that wasn't Clough's style. No, he was convinced they could do it again. And, inevitably, he was right.

Liverpool aim to find forward gear

What a strange, staccato season it has been so far. Disrupted by international involving not a single Englishman, by Champions' League action featuring a club who last won the championship between the wars, and by a floodlight failure at a new hi-tech stadium, the stop-go start must make the British School of Motoring wish they were sponsoring the Premiership.

For the clubs who had slipped straight into the fast lane, particularly those like Blackburn, West Ham and Leicester, who were expected merely to potter along, the start-up was as welcome as a rush hour on the M6. To the teams spluttering in their wake, notably the Merseyside clubs and Aston Villa, the period of theoretical offered a chance for much-needed retuning.

Not so, the Liverpool manager, Roy Evans, complained yesterday. Far from the break allowing them to regroup after gaining a solitary point from two games, it meant they were "left to stew for 10 days".

Evans' mood might have been better if he had been able to name Robbie Fowler for the first time this season at Blackburn. Fowler aggravated a knee injury in training on Thursday, thus ensuring that attention focuses on his fellow Spice Boy, Steve McManaman, after the

Phil Shaw looks for new beginnings in the weekend's Premiership programme

face of his on-off transfer to Barcelona.

Cautioning against panic, Evans said: "We have to be careful not to rip things apart after one bad game." Yet his readiness to sell McManaman could be interpreted as doing precisely that.

Blackburn have cruised to six points, a total they did not reach until November last season. "It doesn't make us champions," Roy Hodgson said. Rovers' new manager proving he has already mastered the Premiership points system. "Liverpool will be highly motivated. Proper teams prepare properly."

Hodgson admitted he had tried to persuade the player leading Liverpool today, Paul Ince, to follow him from Internazionale. "Signing him was a realistic possibility, though to some extent we were fooled by the possibility that he'd stay at Inter. When the move did come it happened very quickly. It would have been difficult for us to break it then."

It is also reunion time at Goodison Park, where Danny Williamson and David Unsworth are set to make their debuts for Everton and West Ham, each

having started the season in the opposition camp. For a third player facing ex-colleagues, the Croatian centre-back Slaven Bilic, the Hammers that concern him most are sure to be John Hartson and Paul Kitson.

Harry Redknapp's attacking duo have transformed the prospects for West Ham, leaving Howard Kendall envious. "I just hope that whatever partnership we have, of Duncan Ferguson and A N Other, will get just as well," the Everton manager said.

Although Everton have played only once – losing at home to promoted Crystal Palace – Kendall's problems in attracting top-class recruits have created a mood only victory can dispel.

Villa have used the hiatus to go "back to basics", as Brian Little put it, successive opening losses baying forced him to revert to three at the back at Liverpool Old Boys, aka Newcastle. That, in turn, means Dwight Yorke and Stan Collymore will shed the third member of the strikeforce which was supposed to take the division by storm, Savo Milosevic.

Someone's 100 per cent records must go as Leicester collide with Manchester United. Martin O'Neill, having beaten two of last year's top five, will not sound plausible should a win over the champions be followed by his customary gratitude for "three more points towards survival".

Ian Wright needs only a single strike at Southampton to equal Cliff Bastin's record of 178 goals for Arsenal. Like Wright, Leeds, at home to Palace, hope to score for the third match running. After netting in only 17 of the 38 fixtures last season – compared with 19 by Wright alone – it would be like George Graham sporting a Paisley bandana in the dug-out.

Meanwhile, a first-day defeat at Coventry for Chelsea's international all-stars, which followed similar surrenders at Leeds, Sunderland, Nottingham and Middlesbrough last winter, should encourage Barnsley to believe that they can beat the FA Cup holders and throw off their Premiership "L" plates at Oakwell tomorrow.



Paul Ince faces his former manager, Roy Hodgson, at Blackburn today. Photograph: Allsport

Spurs agree fee for Nowak

ALAN NIXON

Tottenham Hotspur are signing Peter Nowak, Poland's veteran midfielder, in an emergency £600,000 deal. A price was agreed yesterday by Nowak's German club, 1860 Munich, and a two-year contract worth around £500,000 this season has also been negotiated ahead of a work permit. A consistent performer for both club and country, Nowak is being allowed to move because he could go for nothing at the end of the season. Sunderland are also waiting for a work permit for Jovan Kirovski, an American striker who they have arranged to sign for £800,000 from Borussia Dortmund. They hope for better luck with their application than Manchester United had

when who were forced to let the player go a year ago.

Jim Magilton's move from Southampton to Celtic has been called off by the Scottish club's general manager, Jack Brown. Brown halted negotiations for the Northern Ireland international midfielder, who had been mild at the start of the week that he was Celtic's next transfer target. He is out of contract but was allowed to start discussions about a £500,000 move.

Celtic later confirmed that the 31-year-old midfielder Peter Grant had moved to Norwich in a £200,000 three-year deal, and that the striker Jorge Cadete has been put up for sale.

Rund Gullit has criticised the City rumour-mongers after reports appeared on stockmarket trading screens that the Chelsea manager had been

killed in a car accident. Such rumours could have reduced the price of shares in the club's holding company, Chelsea Village, allowing dealers to profit when the truth emerged. Chelsea stopped the rumours, and the shares closed 50p down.

"For people to want to make a profit out of shares in this way is completely without taste," Gullit said.

Barnsley have failed in their attempt to sign the striker Iain Dowie from West Ham in time for the visit of Chelsea tomorrow. Their manager, Danny Wilson, had hoped to complete the £500,000 deal yesterday.

Aston Villa have accepted Trautman's offer of £60,000 for the striker Neil Davis. Leeds have turned down a request from Crewe to take the transfer-listed Carlton Palmer on loan.

Merson prepares for Boro switch to striker

Nationwide League

Paul Merson may form a potent new front-line combination with Fabrizio Ravanelli as Middlesbrough combat an industrious Stoke side at the Riverside Stadium today.

Merson, a £5m summer signing from Arsenal, forged a role with the Gunners and England as a midfielder playing behind the front two, but he started at Highbury as a striker, scoring 14 goals in their 1989 championship-winning campaign. His skills may be needed to turn around a disappointing start to Boro's First Division campaign.

Assistant manager, Viv Anderson, refused to be drawn on the potential pairing of Merson

and Ravanelli, but with Clayton Blackmore out with an ankle injury and the defender Vladimir Kinkor on World Cup duty with Slovakia, Anderson admits Boro will need their expensive signings to be at their best to beat Stoke.

He said: "Our players had a rude awakening in the first half against Charlton, and Bryan [Robson, the manager] and I were very disappointed with their performance even though we won the game."

Stoke's former striker Mark Stein will be looking for a fresh start now he is back in the First Division. The Chelsea striker, who last played for the Premiership club in November 1995, begins a two-month loan spell with Ipswich at Bradford.

Gascoigne to face 'contenders'

Scottish football

Walter Smith's appraisal of Dundee United as contenders for the Scottish Premier Division title is no empty flattery. Rangers and Tommy McLean's side meet at Broomfield, a match Smith is holding seriously.

"Dundee United were the team that put the best unbeaten run together last season and this is a very important match for us," the Rangers manager said. "Of the teams outside of the

Old Firm I see United as the ones who can mount a title challenge. They may be a wee bit disappointed by starting their league programme with two draws but they are always dangerous opponents."

Paul Gascoigne returns for Rangers, his first domestic game after a three-match ban. Smith added: "We have started to show our all-round match fitness. We need games to get everybody up and playing. "Gazza is needing a game more than anyone as his season

has been disrupted because of suspension but he has been training well enough."

Tommy Bowmaker, the Dundee United defender, said: "The expectations are higher after we finished third last season and it is up to us to build on that. I don't think we have hit top gear yet; we have only really played in fits and starts. It's good that we're playing Rangers ahead of the UEFA Cup return against Trabzonspor as it will concentrate our minds."

Wales are on the brink of landing a prestigious double header with the world champions, Brazil. Bobby Gould's side, rated 90th in the world by the sport's world governing body, Fifa, are negotiating to play the Brazilians home and away before the World Cup finals start in France on 10 June.

The home match would be played outside the principality on a Premiership ground near the Welsh border, with Everton's Goodison Park, Old Trafford, Anfield or Villa Park the favourites. Negotiations began while Wales were in Istanbul preparing to face Turkey this week.

The stumbling block is that the first match could be fixed for next month, while the return in ear-

ly June next year sees the Brazilians asking for a fee to take part. Yet Brazil will be looking for preparation for the World Cup in France 98, and matches against Wales would be to their benefit.

Wales desperately need funds to bolster the meagre coffers of the Football Association of Wales and a match on a major English ground as a money-spinner. Paying Brazil a big fee, however, would cut into profits.

"The game in Brazil could take place on 9 September, in the same week that England play Moldova at Wembley in their World Cup qualifying group. The Brazilians are so keen on this early match that when their request for Wales to go to Brazil

on 10 September was rejected, they immediately contacted the FAW secretary, David Collins, and suggested the previous day. Wales could not guarantee returning players to their clubs in time for the Saturday League programme if the game was staged on the Wednesday. The Brazilians are offering to pay all Wales' expenses.

Whether Wales would be able to secure the release of all their top players for a friendly – such as Manchester United's Ryan Giggs – particularly a trip to South America, is debatable.

However, the opportunity to give emerging Welsh players the chance to experience a match at this level could be invaluable to Bobby Gould's plans.

Shaw sees off Thorne as Johnson also falters

Snooker

The veteran Willie Thorne suffered his second defeat in two days when he was knocked out of the Thailand Masters qualifying competition in Plymouth yesterday.

Thorne, beaten in the first round of the German Open on Thursday, again fell at the first hurdle, when he lost 5-4 to Troy Shaw.

Joe Johnson, the 1986 world champion, suffered the same fate, coming off second best in a deciding ninth-frame shoot out against Sean Storey, from Grimsby.

Thorne, who dropped out of the seeded top 32 players on the world rankings at the end of last season for the first time in 22 years as a professional, fought back from 3-1 and 4-2 down to level at 4-4.

However, a winning comeback proved beyond the 43-year-old from Leicester and Shaw won a low-scoring decider to advance.

Meanwhile, Johnson, 45, established a 4-2 advantage but Storey then began to capitalise on the mistakes of his fading opponent and runs of 98, 50, and 42 gave him a surprise victory to the last frame.

<p>Football</p> <p>League</p> <p>20-15: Wolves, 2-0; Chelsea, 1-0; Arsenal, 1-0; Manchester United, 1-0; Liverpool, 1-0; Tottenham, 1-0; Blackburn, 1-0; Aston Villa, 1-0; Everton, 1-0; Newcastle, 1-0; Leeds, 1-0; Sheffield Wednesday, 1-0; Sheffield United, 1-0; Middlesbrough, 1-0; Derby, 1-0; Nottingham Forest, 1-0; Birmingham, 1-0; Charlton, 1-0; Reading, 1-0; Luton, 1-0; Barnsley, 1-0; Millwall, 1-0; Bury, 1-0; Walsley, 1-0; Gillingham, 1-0; Exeter, 1-0; Yeovil, 1-0; Torquay, 1-0; Dagenham, 1-0; Ebbsfleet, 1-0; Maidstone, 1-0; Dover, 1-0; Margate, 1-0; Cheltenham, 1-0; Gloucester, 1-0; Swindon, 1-0; Oxford, 1-0; Peterborough, 1-0; Notts County, 1-0; Lincoln, 1-0; Mansfield, 1-0; Grimsby, 1-0; Southend, 1-0; Leyton Orient, 1-0; Wrexham, 1-0; Colchester, 1-0; Stevenage, 1-0; Luton, 1-0; Barnsley, 1-0; Millwall, 1-0; Bury, 1-0; Walsley, 1-0; Gillingham, 1-0; Exeter, 1-0; Yeovil, 1-0; Torquay, 1-0; Dagenham, 1-0; Ebbsfleet, 1-0; Maidstone, 1-0; Dover, 1-0; Margate, 1-0; Cheltenham, 1-0; 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IMAGE OF THE WEEK A welcome respite from the scorching sun ... a blanket of fog descends on the beach at St Ives, as paddlers splash their way through the temporary gloom. Picture by David Swanborough using a Canon T90 with a 300mm lens at f11, 1/350th of a second on Kodak Multispeed rated at 640ASA



the long weekend

THE INDEPENDENT • SATURDAY 23 AUGUST 1997

WORDS OF THE WEEK

The perfect kiss-off: flattery, then the boot

Steven Berkoff, right, has been reading a selection of short stories on Radio 4. This is an extract from 'The Agent', a bleak tale about an actor who cannot find work



sensitive handling and time he deserved. Thus the perfect kiss-off - flattery you while giving you the boot!

However, after a week of phoning and polite, respectful rejections, H came to the conclusion that, although he believed his talents were indeed unique, exceptional and original, they were just not suited for this quotidian world of predictable roles and simplistic characterisations. He was not going to crawl to the third division agents from whence he had begun his arduous climb upwards 30 years ago. No, it would be too ignominious to have one's name in the actor's

out on a plank, and was being pushed, albeit gradually. He could look down and see, far below, the writhing limbs of the unemployed actors who were drowning in the agonies of their frustration. Exhausted, swimming from rock to rock, seeking solace in small jobs, and then being washed away by the sheer force of the mass behind them.

Was H ready to jump back into that throng? Was he ready to eke out a life as a player of bits and pieces - the odd telly work, or jobs teaching louts at some dreadful drama school? Their interest in the art of classical speech was minimal compared to their fantasies of starring as gun-toting serial killers.

As a young actor he was too less devoted than a priest to the cloth and, while not exactly a celibate, had never really formed deep relationships. In lonely and meditative moments, he gave the instability of his profession as his excuse. And, anyway, he wanted nothing to interfere with his goal of being a servant of the classics.

In the early days his light was seen to shine in some of the major roles. He drew many admirers of his dazzling Petruchio, his satanic Macbeth, his sensitive Richard II.

But the temptation to earn money in long West End runs of thrillers, reduced the glow somewhat. It was only the lack of more classical roles that made this fall from grace necessary.

ALL THIS explains this devotee's lack of a wife or family. They would have made

demaunds on his love and energy, which would temper the single-minded and obsessive drive which the gods demand before their gifts will be bestowed. But he had to admit that his devotion was to a rather tough god. This god was one which reminded him of his father and really had, as yet, rewarded him with nothing except isolation. Perhaps one carries the father patterns like a tape within one, and in some inevitable way constructs one's own rejection.

Consequently, it will be perceived that the agents' neglect of the simple dues of respectful behaviour, which might have earned contempt in a healthy body, opened in Harry a wound a mile wide. Into it flew every doubt he ever had. He felt he was in a void.

But the one agent he had resisted would without doubt take him on to his hooks - as he does eventually with everyone. For none shall escape him. Being methodical, as behoves bachelor actors, H made his will and settled his affairs. Then, in an act that had a touch of theatricality about it, he calmly threw himself under a train at Leicester Square Tube.

THIS WAS a tad uncharacteristically thoughtless of H. It must have demonstrated the stress he was under.

For, had he known what chaos this was to cause on the Piccadilly Line that afternoon, his own natural, touching concern not to cause others discomfort would surely have led him to make a less conspicuous exit.

The Agent is repeated tonight at 12.30 am on Radio 4.

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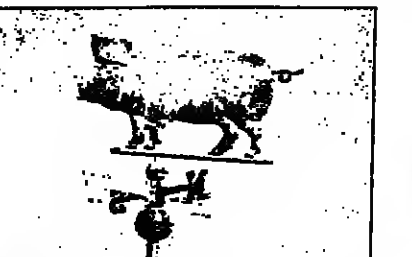
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WORDS FOR THE WEEKEND

Where did Leonardo da Vinci come from? For an answer, you can bank on Bill Hartston

"Are banks open on a bank holiday?" I innocently asked my wife once. As soon as the words were out of my mouth, I realised that I had committed a *Manly Daily*. The term is used to describe a question of such blatant inanity that it answers itself. Not just any old blindingly stupid question, such as "How are the English cricket team doing?" but one in which the answer is shouted out in the formulation of the question itself.

The expression dates back to a holiday I spent in Australia several years ago. A friend of mine had been running an event in Manly, a suburb of Sydney, and was on the phone to the local paper. On hearing that a piece would appear in their next issue, my friend asked: "How often does the *Manly Daily* come out?"

Perhaps the clearest example of the

genre, however, was uttered in the office of this very newspaper, when I heard one journalist ask our then transport correspondent, Christian Wolmar, "Are you Jewish, Christian?" (And while on the subject of Mr Christian, I must confess to having been flummoxed for some time when I was asked the name of the ship in *Murphy on the Bounty*.)

A friend once admitted to having the following conversation with a librarian: "Do you have *The Diary of Anne Frank*?" "Do you know the name of the author?" "Sorry, no."

The reason *Manly Dailies* are so easily perpetrated is that in every case one neglects the primary meaning of a word because it has become embedded in a larger phrase.

A bank holiday is no longer primarily a day on which banks are closed; it's our

holiday, not theirs, and might as well be a bang collie day for all we care; *The Diary of Anne Frank* is a book and film, not Anne Frank's diary; and *Daily* is just another word for a newspaper, like *Gazette* or *News*.

If you are in the habit of asking people what day of the week Good Friday falls on this year, or what time the *Ten O'Clock News* is on (it's about five past ten if there's football before it - do the Trades Descriptions people know about this?), or what town Leonardo da Vinci came from, then you might like to consider becoming a physician. An Oxford classics student I knew once went to his doctor and complained of pain between his ribs. "Ah," said the doctor, "you've got *intracostal neuralgia*."

"That's what I said," replied the classicist, sounding most unimpressed.



The Bank of England - closed on Monday



No rest from mental fight

"I opened as usual with 1.e4, but was rather surprised when he replied with 'n15' and told me this was the Go tournament. Thinking quickly, I played T23 and informed him that I had sunk his battleship, which would have been fine if he hadn't passed me the doubling cube and used all his seven letters in forming the word NO-TRUMP on a triple word score. Luckily for me, he fell down a snake the next move and I was back in the game."

At least, I think that was what the man in the Meatloaf T-shirt said as I passed him at the Mind Sports Olympiad at the Royal Festival Hall. Or it may have been half a dozen other chaps in six other T-shirts. Sprawled over six floors of the building, the Mind Sports Olympiad comprises competitions in 39 different games. From well-established international mental sports such as chess, draughts, bridge and backgammon, through the oriental world of Shogi, Go and Chinese Chess, the African Oware (to which the players appear to be absent-mindedly shifting olive stones between cocktail dishes), there is also room for Scrabble, Skat (a card game popular in Germany), Jigsaws, Othello, Rummikub, Speed Reading, memory and IQ tests, and a host of things I had never seen before, with names such as Abalooce and Fanorona. There is even a Hare & Tortoise competition. My money's on the Tortoise.

With 1,000 entrants signed up before the event began, and another 250 enrolling for

The organisers of the first Mind Sports Olympiad believe that thinking can broaden the mind. William Hartston is not so sure

competitions on the first day, the event has surpassed expectations. Thanks to sponsorship from the Swedish insurance giant Skandia, the total prize fund is over £70,000 with an additional £35,000 in goods.

Organisationally, the whole thing appears – perhaps inevitably – rather shambolic. Apart from the medal ceremonies, with their garish trumpet-fanfare-adorned pomp, there was little sign of any co-ordination between the various events. The hangers festooned around the building confirmed that everything was part of one unified event, but the only real confirmation was the constant sight of harassed-looking members of the organising committee, either collapsed in the press room or, more often, wandering up and down the stairs taking to each other wearily through earpieces. But perhaps the Olympic Games themselves are much the same.

By holding so many events under one roof, and attracting several world champions, even in events that most of us didn't even realise held a world championship, the first Mind Sports Olympiad has undoubtedly succeeded in one objective: this is the greatest Games-fest ever seen in Britain. But there must be

considerable doubt about whether the event has supported the organisers' underlying beliefs about intellectual games.

The event was the brainchild of Tony Buzan, a lecturer and consultant who runs courses designed to enhance people's mental capacities, and chess grandmaster Raymond Keene. Both have long propagated the view that intellectual games are good for you. "Mens sana in corpore sano," says Buzan whenever he is given the chance. One of those unhealthily fit-looking 55-year-olds who bound around exuding energy, Buzan maintains that physical and mental fitness go hand in hand. At the Festival Hall this week, however, "mens sana in corpore sano" might have been a more appropriate motto.

The question is whether playing intellectual games really helps develop the mind for more practical purposes, and the evidence is less clear than the Mind Sports proponents like to believe. Take the world memory champion, Dominic O'Brien, for example, who is hoping to confirm his supremacy in the Memory event at the Olympiad. Able to memorise an entire pack of cards in 40 sec-

onds flat, or a string of some 200 digits, or reel off the answers to all the questions ever seen in Trivial Pursuit, he is clearly a bright chap. Fit, well-dressed and having a wide range of interests, he stands out from the average group of contestants. Having trained himself to perform these prodigious feats of memory, he now does it for a living. And that is the great sorrow of intellectual games.

Just think of all those great minds battling away on the South Bank – people who are the best in the world at their particular areas of mental expertise. And what do they choose to do with their finely honed minds? They play draughts, remember long strings of digits, and shuffle olive pits.

Why do these fine minds not offer their services to London Underground, to help them put up signs at sensible places in Waterloo station so that people can find their way to the South Bank in the first place? Why do they not design an all-British Millennium Dome?

The answer is that playing games well is not good for you at all. It's playing games badly that helps mental development. Learning a game is mind-stretching, but once you have gained sufficient expertise at chess, bridge or gin rummy, all you're doing is improving your skills in one narrow direction. It's the losers at this Olympiad who deserve the medals.

William Hartston will be giving contestants silly things to do in the Mind Sports Olympiad Creativity competition this morning.

Games people play

Pandora Melly learns to catch old ladies with rum

Alexander Thynn, Marquess of Bath, 65, writer and painter

Butterfly-collecting has died out completely. It was once a passion in my life and, for a teenager, I had a very good collection. Recently I found a letter home in which I said I'd just caught an old lady. I remember my mother's bewilderment because she didn't realise that old ladies are moths, which is not usual for every mother to know.

There was a butterfly-collecting fraternity at school. The others called us the Buggers, but we would have preferred if they had called us entomologists. We made night excursions and sugared the trees to catch moths. You mix treacle and rum, and smear it on the bark, and the moths smell it from a long way away, and come and eat it. Once they've had a bit of rum, they become dozy, and you don't have to run very fast to catch them. Drunken moths. Rum is the secret of all the glories.

I know that butterfly-collecting is often held up as a symbol of something sinister: if you go stalking after butterflies, you must be a stalker; but I don't think we thought of it like that. It was more for the love of nature; an excuse to be walking around the woods and making a collection of the beautiful things you see when you go on walks. A butterfly collection is a reminder of those hours spent strolling through nature.

When I took my English butterflies to France to add to my French collection, some horrible little mites got in, and my butterflies became a big banquet for them. It looked so miserable to leave a lot of bodiless wings in a box, so I'm afraid

Backgammon Chris Bray

A pea-souper had descended on London and it was oddly quiet in our rooms in Baker Street. Holmes mused before a roaring fire, apparently oblivious to all around him.

"Holmes, I wonder if I may venture a question on your favourite game?"

"By all means, Watson. My case load contains nothing of great moment, so what better way to spend an evening?"

"I have noticed that when I play my game is constant. I roll the dice, study the candidate moves as you have taught me, make my selection and move my men. Yet when I watch you, I notice that you play some moves with no apparent thought, whilst others take a considerable time. You take the longest time of all when dealing with cube decisions."

"Ah, Watson," replied the great detective, "you have hit upon a key factor of successful backgammon. You cannot play like an automaton. This is a highly complex game even to someone of my intellect. It is true that there are positions where the difference in equity between two possible moves is minute. For example the play of a '1' in a bear-off. In such instances I will often move quickly and conserve my mental energy for the more difficult decisions. Playing top-class backgammon is very tiring and you should not expend energy needlessly."

"On many moves my choice may affect the type of game that will result; on others there may well be a huge equity difference between two candidates. In these situations I will take the time to apply my knowledge and techniques to make sure that I make the right choice more often than not. Even great players are said to make the best move only 80 per cent of the time and my research shows that even this estimate may be too high. As for doubling, look at it this way. In a game you may make 30 moves but you are likely to have to make no more than two doubling cube decisions. It is therefore worth investing the time to evaluate the position accurately. As I have told you before, the largest errors made when moving the men do not begin to equal the equity given away by bad cube decisions."

"Thank you, Holmes. As ever, a lucid explanation."

"Rudimentary, my dear Watson."

The usual Saturday Games Page concise crossword, chess, bridge and perplexity features will return next week.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS JUMBO CROSSWORD

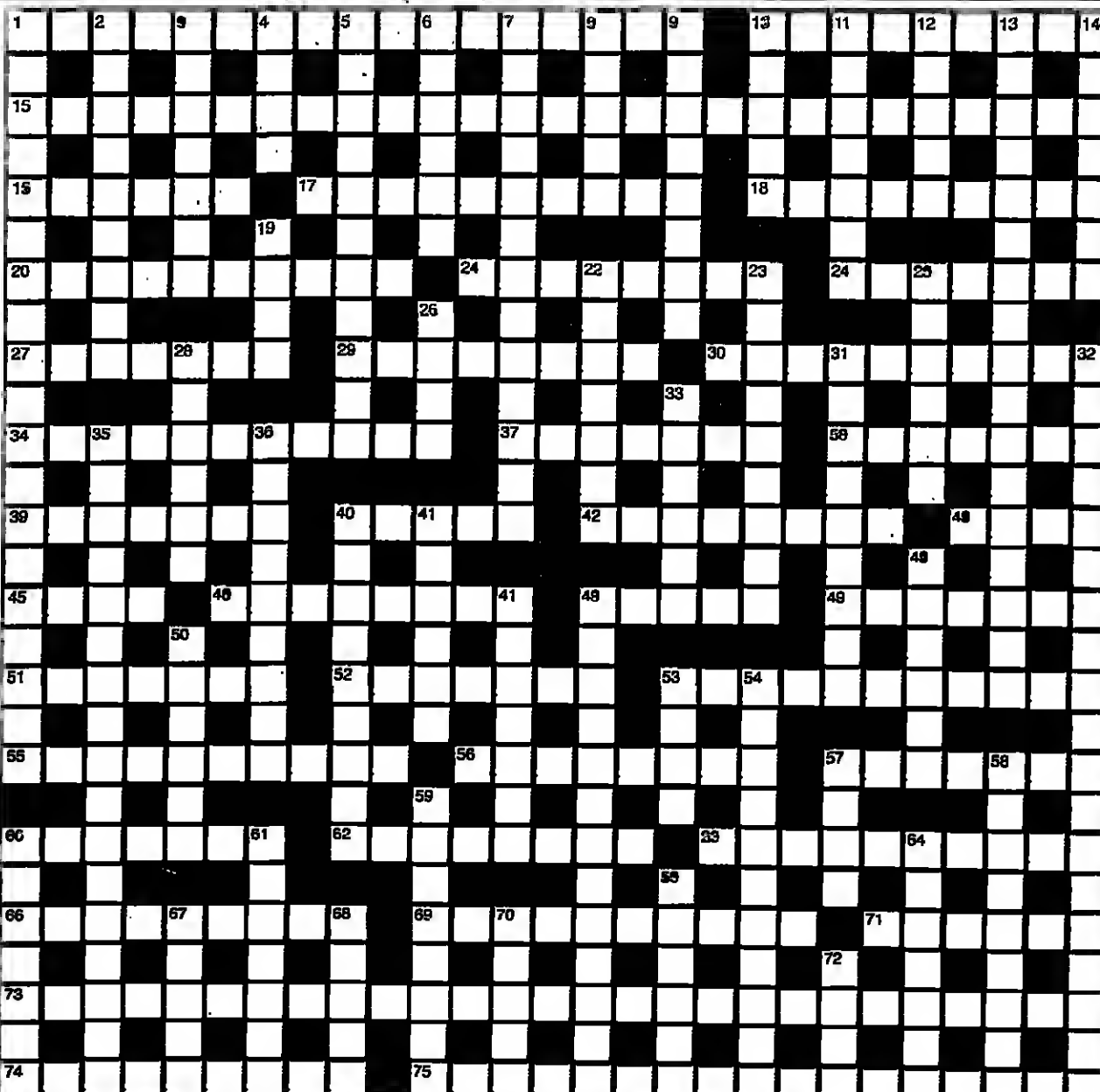
Concise

Across

- 1 Non-violent opposition (7,10)
- 10 Not requiring oxygen (9)
- 15 National quality controllers (7,9,11)
- 16 To do with physicians (6)
- 17 Rare (10)
- 18 More majestic (9)
- 20 Native of southern Spain (10)
- 21 Make up (prescription) (8)
- 24 Cut viciously (7)
- 27 Aridity (7)
- 29 Showing peevish impatience (8)
- 30 Decorator's item (5-5)
- 34 State of serfdom (11)
- 37 Sleeveless vest (7)
- 38 Washer to protect electrical wire (7)
- 39 Unit of radiation dose (7)
- 40 Quick (5)
- 42 Canines (3-5)
- 43 Curved supporting structure (4)
- 45 Makes noise of small dog (4)
- 46 Upper-body garment (8)
- 48 Put clothes on (5)
- 49 Native of south-east Asian country (7)
- 51 Touching line (7)
- 52 Wanton damagers of property (7)
- 53 Italian national policeman (11)
- 55 Interpretation of charts (3-7)
- 56 Best time (4,4)
- 57 Art using everyday material (7)
- 60 Roaming round (2,5)
- 62 Those who reproduce an event (8)
- 63 Item to fill a deficiency (4-6)
- 66 The hour of the place (5,4)
- 69 Spring items of confectionery (6,4)
- 71 Put up resistance (6)
- 73 Female emergency welfare organisation (5,1,5,9,7)
- 74 Crockery for main meal (6,3)
- 75 As if happening in a fantasy (5-2-10)

Down

- 1 Tannoy, say (6,7,6)
- 2 April 23rd for George? (5,1,3)
- 3 First (7)
- 4 Sound reflection (4)
- 5 Cox or Granny Smith (6,5)
- 6 Take no notice of (6)
- 7 Sedated (13)
- 8 Poke gently (5)
- 9 In being (8)
- 10 Fools (5)
- 11 Beasts (7)
- 12 Way from A to B (5)
- 13 It requires clocks to be put forward here (7,6,4)
- 14 Put in middle (7)
- 19 Requests (4)
- 22 Atone for sin (7)
- 23 Precision (9)
- 25 Ancient name of Great Britain (6)
- 26 Let it stand (4)
- 28 High (6)
- 31 Late place of entertainment (9)
- 32 Do or say exactly the right thing (3,3,4,2,3,4)
- 33 Wool clipped from sheep (6)
- 35 An intentional bump on the road (8,9)
- 36 Given for safe-keeping (9)
- 40 Condition of being apt (9)
- 41 Dance or dance tune (6)
- 44 Angle (6)
- 47 Pragmatic person (7)
- 48 Low pressure container glowing from electrical current (9,4)
- 50 A covering (6)
- 53 Manage (4)
- 54 Rabbit-sized marsupial (3-8)
- 57 Change direction (4)
- 58 Italian equivalent of Miss (9)
- 59 Evergreen shrub with rose-like flowers (8)
- 60 Permitted (7)
- 61 People who move to another country (7)
- 64 Nero, say (7)
- 65 Scientist of gravity (6)
- 67 Thrust forward (5)
- 68 Middle-eastern country (5)
- 70 Finland (5)
- 72 Manipulated (4)



- 13 Make the logo price sharp, an optical astronomer might buy it (17)
- 14 Go back to deal with complaint again? (7)
- 19 Rough type of craft, hard to get in (4)
- 22 Gains after initial loss of a succession of bats men (7)
- 23 A nip is taken in tea, designed to make an impact (9)
- 25 Game time at Irish place (6)
- 26 No drink to be sent up in symphony? (4)
- 28 Current American writer of a bit of verse (6)
- 31 Company doctor pursues taste for something supposed to make a fine search? (9)
- 32 Doctor soldier and priest taking action with hesitation about it (7,12)
- 33 One leaving Spanish Fascists could keep on rails with this (6)
- 35 Within the last month speaker has become a painter? (8,9)
- 36 Will try to change name on time (9)
- 40 Look at band of similar people (4,5)
- 41 Put up with some forbidden dures (6)
- 44 Know man putting up doghouse (6)
- 47 Uner for changes (4,3)
- 48 Program reset printers for multilingual woman? (13)
- 50 No lines in writer which could get up your nose irritatingly (6)
- 53 Endure British fish (4)
- 54 Car, good French roadster, the ultimate in greenness? (6,5)
- 57 Speechless male on Australian truck (4)
- 58 Spotted animal from part of Croatia (9)
- 59 Bank on the Spanish producing verse of low quality (8)
- 60 Not so much restricting boy as giving instructions (7)
- 61 Behaved like a toad – stomach came first (7)
- 64 Pestered to join church covered with greenery (7)
- 65 Awfully ratty about one yellowish-white powder (6)
- 67 Expression of surprise on leaving French coast road, finding agreeable spot (5)
- 68 Number three possibly (5)
- 70 Outsize container of old Italian people (5)
- 72 The place of anagrams (4)

Cryptic

Across

- 1 Give too much for inspired salary? (3,7,3,4)
- 10 One catching fish in the sea finds answer in amalgamation (9)
- 15 Make normal use of tobacco there! (3,4,2,4,4,3,5,2)
- 16 Old German chemist gives stony con siderable backing (6)
- 17 Sporting types retain an impression of the plans (1,0)
- 18 Demolish underworld person's stans (9)
- 20 Old car worker is exultant (1,0)
- 21 Was monarch keeping sabbath in a

- submissive state? (8)
- 24 Makes nice arrangement of leaves (4,3)
- 27 Leg falling? Your walking won't then be this (2,5)
- 29 Splitting the beams on former spouse acting as model (8)
- 30 Former Royal name for wood and hill in South Africa (10)
- 34 As meeting is bad formulates a puzzle (1,1)
- 37 Note TV company's nerve-centres (7)
- 38 Here's nothing to restrict what one thinks (7)
- 39 Apt site for making pies (7)
- 40 Journalists having no drink to keep down (5)
- 42 Students backing not very serious

- cause of the day? (8)
- 43 A fish jelly (4)
- 45 Blades cut head off swine (4)
- 46 Victory in Europe secured by one bringing ashore sweet-smelling plant (8)
- 48 Woman would like some of their energy (5)
- 49 In general, deliveries to everyone (7)
- 51 Irish unit seizing gold compound yielding metal (4,3)
- 52 Chap conceals gun, say, in clothing (7)
- 53 The ordinary MP is to support Bishops and Queen? (1,1)
- 55 One left no excessive praise for knotty state (10)
- 56 Cry of surprise cleared other ranks from the passage (8)

- 57 See lid come off with an agreeable sound (7)
- 60 Saying little non-clerical about study (7)
- 62 Professional fellow refs anew, gets presents (8)
- 63 Artist to libel cruelly, suppressing natural response (10)
- 66 Perhaps the day of the psychiatrist is in decline? (9)
- 69 Cogitates changes to second scientific study (10)
- 71 Asian person returns greeting in Italian port (6)
- 73 Honour for chap doing out pub spirit measures? (7,9,11)
- 74 Give in on French regime? (9)
- 75 Perhaps Capability Brown comes ashore on headland with Adam? (9,8)

Down

- 1 Bang goes the planet with this? (10,9)
- 2 Treaty is changed in good exchanges of little con sequence (9)
- 3 An unnatural element of overacting involving one Hun's portrayal (7)
- 4 Hated to get led away, it's a curse (4)
- 5 Comfortable over stays of Wild West characters? (1,1)
- 6 Drying cloth about right for garden implement (6)
- 7 Mistreated computer gives these signals indicating one's human? (5,8)
- 8 Hunter willing to participate to capture South American port (5)
- 9 Yet a minimal price for service (8)
- 10 Wandering nomad spirit (5)
- 11 Opposes island getting swamped in holidays (7)
- 12 A right order to a distinctive fragrance (5)

How to enter

The first correct cryptic solution will win the *Oxford Companions to British History: English Literature and English Language*. The first six cryptic runners-up and the first six concise runners-up will each receive a copy of *The Oxford Companion to English Literature*. Mark entries "Concise Jumbo" or "Cryptic Jumbo" and send them to PO Box 4015, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. Entries to arrive by noon on Thursday, 4 September. Solutions and winners' names will appear on Saturday, 6 September.

For the weather, traffic reports, the sky at night, and Damien Hurts the cartoon sage of artistic angst ... TURN TO PAGE 25

صكنا من الامم

The pass master



John Walsh

talks to MAGNUS MAGNUSSON

The black executioner's chair, now reposing in Magnus Magnusson's Glasgow home, is smaller than you'd expect, its creased leather worn to a chamois softness from the 1,400-odd quaking bottoms that have sat on it over the 25 years of *Mastermind*. Look, I said, the arm-rests have become all silvered and pitted because of all the straining, sweaty hands that have clutched them in agonies of information-retrieval... "No no," said Magnusson equably, "that's because the metal supports have become loosened from all its journeys across the UK. It's just normal wear and tear."

Oh hah. Any fan of the BBC's most legendary challenging quiz show would prefer to believe in the chair's iconic status as a torture victim's throne than in the boring reality. Despite Magnus's cheery, off-camera warm-up cry to contenders that "it's only a bloody game", a considerable army of job-frustrated show-offs, pub-quiz colossi and chenille-skirted know-alls have come to regard *Mastermind* as the ultimate arena of intelligence on display - the Star Chamber where their knowledge of Byzantine ceramics, their weird, hermitic familiarity with the life of Pope Innocent III will allow them to make the transition from sad, fact-harboursing bore to nationally renowned intellectual giant.

In a couple of weeks, the great quiz will be history, its doomy signature-tune ("Approaching Menace" by Neil Richardson) will be heard no more, its Caithness Glass rose-bowl trophies become collectors' items at posh car-boot sales, and its patriotic, Scots-Icelandic inquisitor will be looking for something else to occupy his spare time.

The chair, with its sternly functional lines, looks out of place in Magnusson's handsome *hau-bourgeois* living-room. There's a long comfy sofa, accessorised by its owner's pipe and tartan slippers. On the walls, several oil paintings suggestive of elemental disarray - Mayhill trains in the rain, a stormy landscape of windswept Scandinavian barns, an Auerbach-ish portrait - loom over the figure of Magnusson's sweet grandson, Magnus *minus*, his daughter Sally's youngest child, as he plinks along the family grand piano and goes in search of chocolate boursbons. Magnus *maximus*, now 67, proudly displays his accumulated glassware; an Irish lead crystal rendering of the famous chair, a rose bowl of his very own from the Caithness craftsmen, and a jar of sweets from a neighbour, its cotton lid embroidered with the words: "Magnus. I started 1972. I finished 1997."

The great man is too busy for comfort today, distracted by a clamour of ringing telephones, photographers, a flock of media-circus buzzards alerted by both the demise of *Mastermind* and the launch of a history of the show by Magnusson himself (published on 4 September). He is charming and funny throughout, however, patiently rehearsing anecdotes, recalling names and scores and passes with the utmost interest, as if it were his whole life. Which it isn't, of course, as you can see from his *Who's Who* entry: you need a jeweller's lens to find the single mention of *Mastermind* amid the flood of popular history books (on Ireland, Scotland and Ireland), archaeology works and *belle-lettres* (*Strange Stories*, *Amazing Facts*, *Pass the Port*), not to mention the dozen translations from Icelandic sagas, the umpteen "contributions" and "introductions" to other books, the university fellowships and honorary degrees and dignified committees he's chaired in his hazy life. Did he care that all this eclectic achievement was overshadowed by *Mastermind*?

"It's eclipsed the other things as far as the general public is concerned," he said, in that judicious and trustworthy Scots burr. "But before I did *Mastermind*, I was doing very worthy and earnest work on *Chronicle* [the popular archaeology show he wrote and presented from 1966 to 1981] which was, I thought, extremely important and very rewarding. I was distilling all the knowledge provided by good academics into a more popular and accessible form, and it took me all over the world, meeting people. *Mastermind* started purely as a sideline, a little earner and a welcome one, with five children on the go, school fees and mortgages, the full catastrophe."

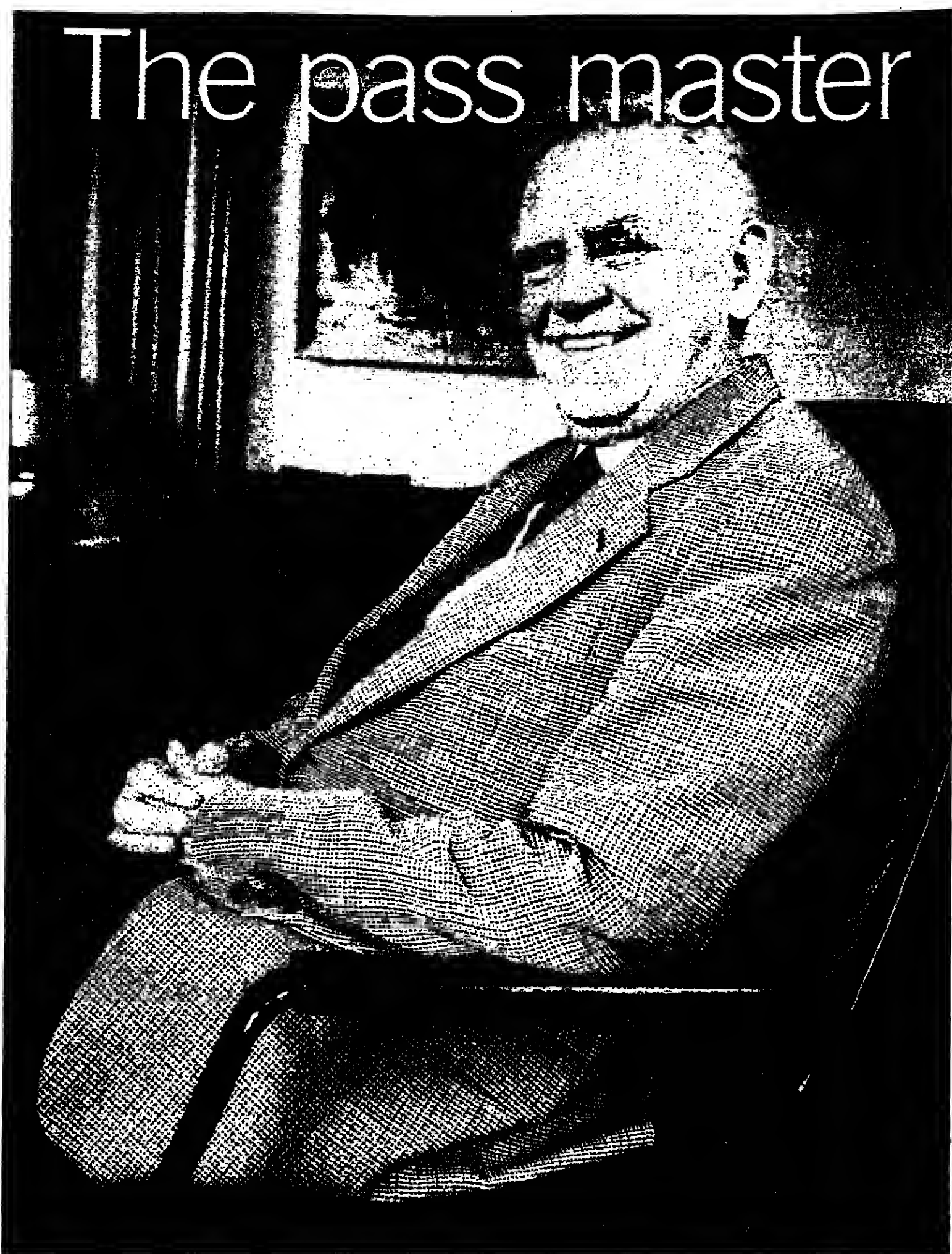


PHOTO: COLIN MACPHERSON

'The idea of the steely-eyed, rat-jawed guy is not terribly me... I'm a terrible old softie'

I wondered about the image of the inquisitor he so endearingly holds in the public mind, the steely-eyed, potentially ruthless, when-did-you-last-see-your-father? magistrate-cum-Gestapo-officer, asking people things relentlessly, out of the darkness. "That was an image I was required to foster in the early series. I was actually called the Interrogator in the credits. But the curt, laconic delivery - 'Correct', 'Nope' - was simply a function of the speed required to get through as many questions as possible. And the idea of the steely-eyed, rat-jawed guy is not terribly me. The contenders all say I'm a terrible old softie. I liked them all, you see. And although the programme, in its presentation, relies on a melodramatic situation, they knew I wasn't there to trip them up."

The highest-ever score was 41, achieved in 1995 by Kevin Ashman, a civil servant from Winchester (special subject: Dr Martin Luther King Jr and the Civil Rights Movement). "His score was theoretically impossible," said Magnusson. "Because I time all the questions and answers at studio speed with a stopwatch, and there should be time for exactly 20 questions in each round, if the answers are prompt and accurate. But some people, like Ashman, are so bloody fast, they do the impossible..." Magnusson displays a kind of benevolent awe about others of his charges. "Jennifer Keaveney," he said wonderingly, "who scored 40 in 1986, was an absolute automaton. While she was answering, she switched into some computer mode, completely

deadpan. I noticed when I shook her hand afterwards it was ice-cold, as if she'd become a shaman... And there was Mary-Elizabeth Raw, the vet in the wheelchair, who had entered, as much as anything, to prove that disablement did not affect your mind. She wanted to win very badly indeed, and to score 40 was a colossal triumph of the will."

I reminded him of the downfall of Susan Reynolds, which, like 10 million others, I watched, horrified, in 1974: an Oxford classics student with the face of a Dresden shepherdess, she sailed through the heats (special subject: "Greek Mythology"), lummed through the semi-final ("The Works of Richard Wagner") and entered the final taking "British Ornithology" as her subject. Disaster struck. Due to a fit of amnesia, panic attack or hubris, she couldn't answer any questions about birds. As she whispered "Pass" again and again in a sad little mantra, Magnus said, in his kindly way, "Do try to answer some of these..." and the country collectively wept for her. "It emerged later that she'd had an accident that afternoon, and was hit by the wardrobe door in her hotel room," said Magnusson. "There was a great bruise on her forehead, hidden by make-up. And I have a theory that she'd chosen the wrong aspect of her subject - she knew all about Bird Identification, but I suppose she thought Ornithology sounded posher..."

He really does seem to have total recall of this quarter-century of faces, this Niagara of questions, this blizzard of facts. The book, *I've Started So I'll*

Finish, is beguilingly crammed with good stories, especially the moments of Magnusson's fluffs and botched questions ("The solanaceous plant *Lycopersicon esculentum* is a genus of which tomato?"). There's the lady contender who was taking Valium to calm her nerves and got plastered on two glasses of sherry; and the Beethoven expert who strode off the set in exasperation when his answers weren't accepted ("We were terribly slack in those days; we wouldn't dream of checking the special-subject questions..."). Hadn't he fallen out with some of them? "I took a quite irrational dislike to one man, who came on with a dog-collar, called himself the Reverend Robert Peters from some theological college. I found him insufferably arrogant. The day after his appearance, people started saying he was some kind of imposter. Then the *News of the World* exposed him. He was an Anglican vicar, who'd been unfrocked for bigamy, had gone to New Zealand and married again, so he was a trigamist, and had returned to England with his gorgeous new wife. What was his subject? 'The Life and Times of Archbishop William Temple. He didn't do very well.' Magnusson noted with grim satisfaction.

The quiz-master sometimes gives the impression of believing his own image as the fount of all knowledge. Unbelievably, people often ring him at home to ask him the capital of South Dakota or what won the Grand National in 1933, and he has a sneaky way of asking his interlocutors what they know. "Most of the answers go by in a blur, unless it's

a subject that interests me, like history or archaeology. But some things stick - like when I learnt the meaning of the word 'shibboleth'..."

He cocked an interrogative eyebrow at me.

You mean a password or rallying cry?

"Yes, but what's *really* interesting is..." The eyebrow lifted again. I seemed to be taking part in some test. "...Is that it's the old Hebrew word for an ear of corn and, in the war between the Gileadites and the Ephraimites, was used as a password for detecting infiltrators because, if asked to say the word out loud, the Ephraimites invariably pronounced it 'shibboleth'?"

Magnusson looked at me. "Well done," he said shortly. "You're the only person who's been able to answer that." I later learnt it's indeed a little test he gives interviewers.

Did he think memory had much to do with intelligence? "I think memory is a factor in intelligence, certainly. If your retrieval system is good, then your intelligence can flourish more." Did he think the concept of "general knowledge" had become a little moth-eaten? "No, I think the enjoyment of knowledge is still there, as you can see from the growth in pub quizzes. You may call it 'trivia', but it's just as important to people as darts and they take it as seriously. I think there's a constant celebration of what you can do inside your head, and *Mastermind* reflected this interest and promoted it as well."

Almost unnoticed, Magnusson has slipped into committee-speak, an idiom with which he is very familiar. His chairmanship of Scottish Natural Heritage, which runs out in 1999 (when I'm 70, the century's over and, as with *Mastermind*, it's the right time to make a graceful exit) is a bureaucratic chore he takes very seriously. Their remit is "to look after and enhance the natural heritage of Scotland and aid its enjoyment and understanding", while briefing the Secretary of State for Scotland on gripping matters of soil erosion, designated areas and scheme facilities. Magnusson's voice drops below his habitual low purr when talking of such things, until you fear we both may fall asleep; but he is reanimated passionately by the subject of birds.

He worries about how to protect the rare Greenland white-fronted geese who have moved *en masse* to Islay. He's concerned about the repercussions of the Common Agricultural Policy on the corn hunting and skylark. He notes that the corn crane, once to be seen in the streets of Edinburgh, "has been driven into the last bastion of the Western Isles. Although the figures are beginning to go up - there were a hundred calling males recorded last year..." Gosh. Was he a twitcher? "No, no. But you sound so..." "Well I love 'em. At school I started a Bird Watchers' Society, now called the Ornithology Society," [he chuckles. We seem to be back in Susan Reynolds territory]. "I won the Public Schools Essay Competition when I was a wee laddie, writing about birds." The title? "It was on the mating rituals of blackbirds. In March and April, I used to cycle down to some woods before school, and there one day I saw this ring of male blackbirds with a female in the middle. I couldn't find any reference to it in bird books, so I wrote about my observations and it was later confirmed that that's what blackbirds do."

He has a thing about badgers too. And archaeological sites (his recreations, according to *Who's Who*, are "digging and delving"). And derivations, both of words and family names ("the name Magnus comes from Charlemagne, 'Carolus Magnus' you see, though the first Magnus was the son of St Olaf of Norway..."). And women. Stories of a mildly scandalous nature have long accreted around Magnusson's saintly snow-white bonce. One publishing lady took him to lunch to discuss the publicity schedule of his new book and was startled when he interrupted her, placed an avuncular hand on her arm and breathed, "It's OK. I've booked a room where we can go and make love..." "I don't remember that at all," says Magnusson with a delighted laugh. "If I did it, I was probably winding her up."

There is a decidedly skittish streak about this Establishment figure, a touch of the Viking lurking inside his quiz-master sobriety. He was once invited on to Radio 4's *Any Questions*. The first question was about the safest way to keep football hooligans penned in without danger. Magnusson suggested wiring up their chairs and running an electrical current through them if they misbehaved. "I just thought it needed a bit of irony amid all the earnest stuff," he says. "But they didn't ask me again..." When you ask him what's in store, what new career he can embark on at 67, it's good to hear that he's not settling for writing books in retirement and tartan slippers. "What I'd most like to do now is a TV series on the *Odyssey*, in 24 parts, showing where Nestor's Palace was." Yes that seems an appropriate place for this restless but reassuring figure to end up - bringing an epic down to manageable proportions for ordinary people to enjoy. And just imagine the interviews: "Name?" "Cyclops." "Occupation?" "Giant." "Your special subject?" "Eating sailors." "Your two minutes start... now."

Meet Deep Brown, my Couchagotchi

Mark Little on one man's struggle to bring a little added velour to the Festival Fringe

It's a funny game. Performance art's even funnier. But when you're talkin' alternative performance art at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, crank up the weirdness. Not that I'm saying there are a lot of weird people performing in Edinburgh this year, quite the contrary. Most everyone I've met from Spain, Scotland, Australia, America, New Zealand, Wales, Africa or wherever have been really down-to-earth, sweet folk. Bung them all in the one town, though, for three weeks, with nothing to do but perform and party, and it gets weird enough. Just the way I like it, of course, and one of the reasons I keep coming back.

I have travelled to Edinburgh this year with my own little piece of performance madness called *Psychobubble*, the most freeform and dangerous show I've attempted in a long time. (I haven't been so excited about what is possible on the alternative comedy stage since pre-*Neighbours* Melbourne in the mid-1980s.)

At the very centre of this whirlwind of comic energy I have a couch - an ugly Mock-Crock velour settee that basically constitutes my set. It is, I

believe, the story of this three-seater that truly exemplifies the special weirdness that is the annual Edinburgh Festival.

To get my audience in the mood for chat, I reckoned I needed to play on their compassion. And what better way to hunt out compassion than to facilitate the need for me to be rescued. And what was the most famous rescue of the last 12 months? Lone round-the-world yachtsman Tony Bullimore trapped within his upturned vessel in the Great Southern Ocean for four days, miraculously rescued alive by the Australian Navy.

Perfect. I'll get myself trapped and call for help. Trapped in what? An upturned couch, of course! Let the search begin!

I knew I'd know the right couch when I saw it and sure enough, after scouring a few of the second-hand shops of Brighton, there it was. The Couch. "Can I just check if I can carry

it?" I asked. "Sure," said the bloke. "I just need to see if I can dance with it." "OK," he nodded. "Do you mind if I just take it on the pavement to make sure I can get under it?" No reply. Just a stare, as I flipped it over and upturned the big brown bummer on top of me. £45 he wanted. He got it and I gained a virtual friend. My "Couchagotchi".

Rehearsals went smoothly and, apart from one embarrassing moment when my wife caught me talking to myself under the couch in the conservatory, I was happy. Time to test the couch rescue.

I took the couch - which I had now given artificial intelligence and renamed Deep Brown - along to the Bolshoi Circus tent during the

Brighton Festival. I took it along to the Battersea Arts Centre in South London.

I found, though, that I couldn't just leave it lying around like a couch because people just used it like a couch. At the Battersea Arts Centre it turned into a props table for some extremely alternative cabaret. I was quietly upset. This was my friend. This was weird.

I stood it upright and attached a sign. THIS IS DEEP BROWN, THE COUCHAGOTCHI BIOLOGICALLY ENGINEERED ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE.

DO NOT DISTURB AS THIS COULD RESULT IN DEATH.

AND NO ONE WANTS TO SIT ON A DEAD COUCH.

London went well. "The Couch" was well reviewed in the press. So was I. We were happy.

Off to Edinburgh. No one seemed to want to ship my couch up North for me. I was getting attached to it anyway. "I'll take it myself," I thought. "I want to be with it."

The whole family were going. My wife and two kids and me. Everywhere we looked, families were going on holidays. Cars stacked up with holiday necessities. Everyone seemed to have tents, sailboards, surfboards, bikes, major implements of holiday fun strapped to the roofs of their cars. Except us. We had "The Couch". My family were understanding and the ropes were tight. I got my "friend" to Edinburgh without its being blown off the roof and killing anyone on the M1 (my main fear).

The couch is now starring on the Edinburgh Fringe. For the first four minutes of my show, that's all you get, a talking upturned couch. It gets a good response and a couple of rounds of applause (which makes me think the shows these people have already seen must have been real rubbish). Yet of course, off-stage, Deep Brown is still just a couch. Success has not spoiled it.

I have now learnt to share my "virtual friend". So far the bloke who plays Richard Burton has had a sleep on it. So has the freak who lifts stuff with his genitalia. Assorted hard stage crew have crashed on it. Paul Morricone and Olé have crashed into it and Mika, the Maori cabaret sensation, has avoided it. The Edinburgh Festival is a spectacle and I truly recommend a visit. But he warned: the special weirdness that is this festival can have you loving performance art you would not normally go and see. I personally know of crowds who've thrilled to an ugly upturned couch. Edinburgh Festival. Glad to be here, hope to be back.

Mark Little's *Psychobubble* is at the Assembly Rooms, venue 3 (0131-226 2428) 8.25pm tonight. He can also be seen hosting Channel 4's *The Feel Good Factor* on Tuesday at 8pm.

arts & books

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Where angels fear to tread

He'll never play the chisel-jawed leading man but Alan Cumming has a misfit's charm, a sideline in writing, an Olivier... and the gall to accept a big part in the new Spice Girls film. By Jasper Rees

Alan Cumming's entry in *Spotlight*, the actor's almanac, says he is 5ft 10in, has dark hair and blue eyes. This summer, he filmed a two-minute scene in the Stanley Kubrick movie *Eyes Wide Shut*, in which he plays a hotel clerk who forms an instant crush on Tom Cruise. As he gazed for three days on Cruise's iconically cheesy face, Cumming may as well have been lusting after a blurred mirror image of himself. Same-colour hair and eyes, same-size grin and (contrary to rumours circulating about Cruise's need for stack heels) roughly the same height. These are classic leading-man specifications, and yet the only leading man Cumming has ever played is in *Hamlet*, a play about a man who doesn't want the lead role.

Instead, Cumming is perpetually the geek, the creep, the nerd, the pout, the fop. Anything but the straight-up-and-down hunk. Last year, after making successful Hollywood-financed films over here such as *Circle of Friends* and *Emma*, he got the call to make two movies in L.A. Producers over there had his number in no time. In *Romy and Michele's High School Reunion*, which opened here this week, he plays a nerdy millionaire with a crush on Lisa Kudrow, whose only moment of machismo comes in a wish-fulfilling dream sequence. Having got him to voice the horse in *Black Beauty*, the writer-director Caroline Thompson then asked him back to play a trainer of chimpanzees in *Buddy*. The script was adapted by Thompson from a book by Gertrude Lintz about bringing up a gorilla among chimps, and the film also stars Renee Russo and Robbie Coltrane. Training chimps sounds close to perfect casting: there is something about Cumming's impishness that is next to chimpanziness.

"I'm always going to play weird people," he says. "But that's fine. When I read scripts I always find the part of the lead man dull. Thus in *For My Baby*, an arthouse film shot in Hungary last winter, he plays a stand-up comedian and son of Holocaust survivors who is in denial about his Jewishness. This winter, he goes to Broadway with the director Sam Mendes to reprise his satiric MC in *Cabaret*, a three-year-old Christmas hit in the

Donmar Warehouse. (Natasha Richardson will play Sally Bowles.) Lately, a script even landed on his desk fingering him for the part of Hitler.

Clearly, casting directors have taken his Bond villain — he played the dastardly Russian computer whiz in *Goldeneye* — as something of a handrail. "I can't tell you the number of films I got offered after that to play computer geeks." But just about the only people who have spotted any consistency in his role selection are the manufacturers of the headpieces worn by telephone operatives. He wore one in *Goldeneye*, and another in the BBC's *Burn Your Phone*. His picture has found its way into their trade magazine. "They think I'm just fantastic, because every film I'm in I wear their product."

Last, and possibly least in his gallery of misfits (though let's reserve judgement), he has slapped on a chest wig to play a posh maker of documentaries in *Spice: The Movie*.



Other actors might have shrunk from this particular offer, but not Cumming: "I knew that my agent might be a bit sniffy about it so I just told them. 'If I'm offered it, I'm definitely going to do it; don't even try to dissuade me.'" (Brief tangent: when Cumming learnt that Ginger Spice had seen his *Hamlet*, he all but got a T-shirt printed to announce the fact.)

It would be easy to deduce from *Spice* and other sugary ventures that Cumming has simply gone for



Alan Cumming: geek, creep, nerd, Hollywood veteran (above), and below, as a cyber-whiz in 'Goldeneye'

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

the commercial jugular. "Sometimes I do things for the money," he admits, "but I know why I'm doing them. I don't think something is *Citizen Kane* when it's not." But it's not always easy to square his frank pursuit of the dollar with the scepticism that formed a large part of the baggage he took to Hollywood. He talks with the hafflement of someone brought up in the remote Scottish countryside about the ritualistic comportment of film folk: the my-Winoehago's-bigger-than-yours syndrome, the power trips of certain costars, the inventory of on-set perks on his contract. "Rental car, mobile phone, trailer with a fridge, CD, microwave oven. It's like someone's doing their wedding list or something."

In the too-frank-to-publish journal he kept of his nine months in Hollywood, those things he found "bizarre and hilarious" in the first couple of months "weren't even mentioned as I went on because I was so used to them. The longer I stayed there, the more depressing I found it, because I can see how you get sucked in. You yearn for a conversation about something other than box-office grosses." After *Romy and Michele* opened, "I got all these phone calls saying, 'Hey, congratulations, your movie took seven and a half million on the first weekend.' Or was it nine and a half? Who Gives A Fuck?" The darker and more complex *Buddy*, meanwhile, has fared "very badly. There's no justice in that respect. If you spend too long in that world, you start thinking that films that make lots of money are good."

In the beginning, Alan Cumming made his name in stand-up. He formed Victor & Barry with the shorter, carrotier Forbes Masson, and in their Edinburgh Festival debut they were trashed in *The*

Scotsman by none other than this newspaper's editor, Andrew Marr. They sewed a retort into the act to the tune of "Lucky Stars": "We can thank you, Andrew Marr, that you're not as smart as you like to think you are."

The Cumming-Masson liaison eventually came up with *The High Life*, the sitcom about in-flight cabin attendants that they wrote themselves. Its audience was ambivalent about its merits, but then so were its stars. "Some people really love it — it's scary how much — or they hate it. I think that's good. We wanted to call it *A Load of Camp Old Pish*. We really wanted to do something that was really tacky, and the people who were making it with us just didn't get it. The head-banging-against-the-wall part of trying to do something different and weird with the sitcom form is something that I would never want to repeat." The BBC have none the less pressed for a second series, while showing a red light to dramas by Sharman MacDonald and Ol Parker that Cumming was signed up to make. "My agent phoned up to see about them and they said, 'Maybe, if he does another series of *The High Life*, it would be more likely that they'd go ahead.' Isn't that revolting?"

Alongside the cabaret, Cumming swiftly built up a name in formal theatre but, since his kid Hamlet and his camp MC, he has given the boards a wide berth. "When I came back from Hollywood, I really tried to do a play, but I haven't found anything I like enough to do here. When you've played Hamlet and the MC, there are very few roles that are going to be a challenge." It may be that he's not looking hard enough, but at least he can fall back on his auxiliary talent as a writer. When he takes what could be seen as a retrograde step into *Cabaret*, he will continue in New York to workshop a one-

man show "about loneliness" that he spent last week developing at the National Theatre Studio.

Actually, it's not quite true to say he hasn't been on stage in years. He gets asked to hand out a lot of awards. "They are never there, the people I give them to. They say to you, 'And so, Alan, will you take it and keep it for them until you see them?' And you think, fuck, I've never met them in my life before, and you go, 'Yes, I'll hold on to it.' I was so tempted to steal a Bafta. I walked off the stage and no one takes it off you and I thought I could go to my dressing-room and just put this in my bag. Imagine having a Bafta on your mantelpiece and you'd stolen it."

He hasn't been on the receiving end of an award since his Olivier for *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* at the National. *Buddy*, though bringing a rare taste of box-office rejection, has none the less earned him trophies he can display at home. The film required him to get to know the quartet of chimps whose keeper he played in the film. "It was like I was a nanny for four kids for a few months. One of them was absolutely in love with me: Tonka, as in the trucks. When they really like you, they want to groom you, and they want to play with you. He would pick up my hand and hit my hand on his head so that then he could be justified in hitting me so we could start playing. I felt so flattered. I even took my chimp Polaroids in to show Stanley and Tom [Kuhnick and Cruise, in case you're wondering]." Tonka is also an artist. His keeper faxed some of his work to Cumming's hotel in Budapest. "And I've got two paintings that he did in my bedroom." And is he talented? "He shows a lot of potential."

Romy and Michele's High School Reunion is on general release

NEXT WEEK IN

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WEEK IN REVIEW

By Adam Buxton

overview
critical view
on view



THE FILM Lost Highway

Directed by David Lynch from a script cowritten with Barry Gifford. This inexplicable conjunction of film noir set-pieces stars Patricia Arquette as both a gangster's wife and the murdered wife of a saxophonist, Bill Pullman as the convicted musician and Balthazar Getty as a mechanic who takes his place on death row and is subsequently released, only to fall in love with the adventurous wife of a gangster...

Adam Mars-Jones was enthralled by 'a Möbius strip of mystifying narrative, a story with two sides but a single surface'. But *The Times* was troubled by the poor metaphysics: 'Time and space are bent out of shape: one character merges into another... the lines connecting cause and effect are impossibly skewed'. *The Guardian* offered a judicious recommendation: 'As watchable as any movie he has ever made', while *The Mirror* mused: 'More Lapsang Souchong than PG Tips, David Lynch isn't everyone's cup of tea.'

At cinemas nationwide

Austere and insolubly enigmatic, a movie to irritate and fascinate



THE PLAY Massage

Steven Berkoff writes, directs and stars in a play exploring the sexual hypocrisy of the British, the fragmentation of domestic and social life and the 'delightful' institution of the massage parlour. Berkoff drags up as a disaffected wife turned masseuse on the quiet, Barry Phillips plays her embittered husband — who happens to frequent massage parlours — and an assortment of other customers.

Sue Wilson observed a 'marked departure from Berkoff's trademark intensity'. *The Telegraph* lamented 'a truly terrible show', while *The Times* tried to avoid the spectacle of Berkoff 'dragged up grotesquely to the nines like the panto dame he may yet end up being'. *The Evening Standard* enjoyed it more: 'He totters around, twisting his heavily made-up features into a pornographic mask and miming the manipulation of impossibly large members in the air.'

Assembly Rooms, Edinburgh (0131-226 2428) to 30 Aug

The focus of much expectation, now reduced to the status of freak show



THE GIG Blur

For the headlines of V97, last weekend was a real homecoming, and not just in Chelmsford. For the first time Blur took their new material to a wide British audience — first Essex, then Leeds. In a week where the music media hyper-ventilated over Oasis, this was a pointed demonstration of how good pop music can be.

Ben Thompson remarked that there was 'something very healthy about the faint sense of unease which the crowd carries out into the Essex night'. But in the *NME*'s opinion, 'complete destruction has been narrowly avoided'. *The Times* was more optimistic, noting with approval that Albarn was 'clearly happy and confident in his own Essex backyard'. *The Evening Standard*, by contrast, likened him to 'an eight-year-old boy who has just been given a scalextric for Christmas'.

On tour in November and December. Damon Albarn will appear in a radio version of Joe Orton's 'Up Against It' on 15 Sept and in Antonio Bird's film 'Face' next month

Worth being there then, especially if you were Damon Albarn

سكرا من الاميل

Inaction man

Chris Darke celebrates the ambiguous on-screen persona of Alain Delon, French cinema's most impassive star

As the French film journal *Cahiers du cinéma* pointed out in a lengthy interview with Alain Delon published last April, the actor's surname is an anagram of *le don* - "the gift". And the gift that set Delon apart during the Sixties is now once again on display, thanks to the re-release of René Clément's 1960 film *Plein Soleil*. An adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's novel *The Talented Mr Ripley*, in which Delon plays the seductively sociopathic anti-hero, *Plein Soleil* was Delon's break-through film. Before it, he had been identified, along with Jean-Paul Belmondo, as an up-and-coming *jeune premier* (leading man) of the French cinema and, in his early career, he had adorned a number of lightweight romantic comedies. In the same year as *Plein Soleil* appeared, Belmondo went on to shoot *A bout de souffle* with Jean-Luc Godard and found himself transformed into an *acteur-flic* of the French New Wave. Delon would never be as directly associated with that explosive moment of cinematic creativity as Belmondo, but with *Plein Soleil* his international career was assured. Clément's film revealed Delon in his coldly angelic prime, capturing that quality of ambiguity that was to define the actor's persona for the rest of his career and that so admirably suited this Highsmith adaptation.

The novel's hero, Tom Ripley, has been entrusted with the task of bringing Philippe Greenleaf (Maurice Rocco), the errant son of a wealthy American father, back home from Italy. Moving between Rome and the Amalfi coast, the action opens with Ripley impressing Greenleaf with his talent for forging signatures. It's a skill that grows into a fully fledged and deadly imposture: Ripley murders Greenleaf and assumes his identity. His intention is to harvest the dead man's wealth as well as his girlfriend, Marge (Marie Laforet).

Delon plays Ripley as a purely reflexive schemer, shading his character so that the desired outcome of Ripley's subterfuge - easy access to the idle-rich lifestyle - seems only slightly less important than acquitting himself elegantly in the game of deceit. But there's an ugly edge here, too. It's something hinted at by the American critic Donald Lyons, who wrote that the film "posits, in a coyly Nietzschean way, the right of beauty to legislate its own existence". And if that includes rubbing out

a few of the less beautiful people, then so be it. *Beauté oblige*.

There's also a sense in which, in his rapt concentration on his star, Clément seems almost to be endorsing this quasi-fascistic identification with Ripley the *übermensch*. Perhaps that explains why, at the end of the film, Delon gets his comeuppance, whereas Highsmith's novel lets Ripley get away with it.

In many ways, *Plein Soleil* reads like a documentary about Delon, both a heady observation of a gifted screen animal and a closely choreographed ballet of dissimulating gestures and movements. Delon here has a physical presence and dynamism that are compelling to watch: in that respect the film is a study of on-screen grace.

Throughout his career, Delon remained unstinting in his praise of Clément, calling him "his master". He has described how Clément directed him on *Plein Soleil*: "He showed me the sets and said, 'Go on, throw yourself about. Move!' He manipulated me like a marionette." But, beneath the athleticism of his performance, there is a stillness, a watchfulness that make Delon's Ripley an enigma.

This combination would be reprised throughout his career, frequently under the guidance of major *auteur* puppet-masters. There would be his association with Visconti on *Rocco and His Brothers* (1960) and *The Leopard* (1963); with Antonioni on *The Eclipse* (1962), where Delon's petulant dynamism is at odds with the usual anguish of the Italian director's male characters; with Joseph Losey on *The Assassination of Trotsky* (1972) and *Mr Klein* (1976); above all, with the great French thriller director Jean-Pierre Melville.

Delon made three films with Melville, including the seminal *Le Samouraï* of 1967, in which Delon's performance as the hired killer Jeff Costello attains an almost Zen-like stillness. Both *Plein Soleil* and *Le Samouraï* are "procedural" films, in that they are both obsessed with the preparation and execution of crimes, but Melville abstracted all but the most glacial element of Delon's menace and did so to tremendous iconic effect.

Delon's quality of tough-guy stillness is often summed up by the short-hand description "laconic" - for which read "Say little, do less". And it's true that he shares qualities with both Robert Mitchum and John Garfield (Delon has spoken of Garfield as "his model") as well as with

a more immediate peer in Jean-Louis Trintignant - always more an "actor" than a "star" in France but still distinguishing himself to the same territory of cold-eyed misanthropy.

Delon's persona has been crystallised by well-publicised associations that have played up the element of menace in his on-screen performances. In 1969 he was implicated in a drugs scandal and admitted to having been involved with the Marseilles mafia, whose past he mythologised (alongside Belmondo) in the hugely successful historical crime caper *Borsalino* (1970). There's also his background seen as "myth" - those details of a past that stars will deliberately emphasise to enhance their image. Delon's is an interesting one. "I fell into cinema," he has said. He'd been a parachutist in Indo-China at the age of 18, trained as a boxer for *Rocco and His Brothers*, remains a vocal friend of the Gaullist right-wing and makes no secret of his admiration for the military. It's this mixture of individualist and adventurer, with a strong authoritarian streak, that he capitalised upon throughout the 1970s to a series of frequently self-produced cop films.

Plein Soleil is not normally considered as a New Wave film. In fact, Clément himself was regarded by the New Wave as a prime exponent of "le cinéma de papa", a derisive epithet for the 1950s style of French movie-making, with its devotion to the virtues of solid craftsmanship and literary source texts. It was against this perceived moribund establishment that the New Wave declared Oedipal war. Yet it was clear that, with *Plein Soleil*, Clément wanted in. This may have been the reflex of a director smart enough to notice the tide turning and deciding to surf the new currents. But in his use of cinematographer Henri Decaë, who shot Truffaut's 1959 break-through film *Les quatre cents coups*, and of Paul Gégau, Claude Chabrol's script collaborator, as his co-screenwriter, Clément declared his desire to be part of the new French cinema. And, in casting Delon, who was still something of a new face at the time, he found his equivalent to Belmondo.

While Clément's film has none of the free-wheeling, experimental joy that the New Wave directors demonstrated, there's a kind of kinship between the characters of Belmondo's Michel Poiccard in *Godard's A bout de souffle* and Delon's Ripley in *Plein Soleil*. Both are early Sixties



Alain Delon in his 'coldly angelic prime' as the seductively sociopathic hero of 'Plein Soleil'

images of young men on the make who are prepared to go all the way to get what they want. Both films are intrigued by the existential consequences of this will-to-power and both, in the traditional French *noir* scheme of things, have their anti-heroes pay for their ambitions. Henri Decaë's Eastmancolor cinematography gives Clément's film a texture that, viewed today, is as immersively colourful as a 1960s picture postcard. Fakey, again. A simulacrum without shadow, the perfect frame in which to claustrophobically depict a criminal at work.

Delon's career since his Sixties heyday has looked increasingly like a balancing

act between maintaining his status as mainstream *vedette* and continuing to diversify with appearances in *auteur* films. An attempt at a Hollywood career in the mid-1960s yielded unspectacular results and his European career floundered in the 1980s. An attempt at a comeback with the 1992 film *Le Retour de Casanova* (The Return of Casanova), in which Delon starred as the ageing Italian roué, failed to attract audiences on the strength of his name alone. Curiously enough, it was Delon's long-awaited collaboration with a former New Wave director, Jean-Luc Godard, in *Nouvelle Vague* (1990) that gives the best account of late-period Delon. And Godard, as is his habit, quotes freely from

Plein Soleil in his own film's motif of death by drowning and in Delon's character of an ambiguous interloper among a group of wealthy business people.

"I wanted to film Delon as if he was a tree," Godard has explained. The commanding stillness of the Delon persona is still on view in *Nouvelle Vague* but is layered now with melancholy and the sense of a man internally exiled through his own narcissism.

'Plein Soleil' is now showing in London at the Screen on the Green (0171-226 3520), the Everyman (0171-435 1525) and the Curzon Phoenix (0171-369 1721)

EDINBURGH FESTIVAL REVIEWS

Opera Ariadne auf Naxos

"Let's hope the opera nonsense doesn't get hallooed up," exclaims M Jourdain, Molière's bourgeois anti-hero, as a performance of Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* is planned. The adroit integration of comedy and epic is chiefly accomplished by the conducting of Richard Armstrong. He animates without hurrying, broadens without dragging, pathos, and it needs a dancer and comedian as well. Lisa Saffer has everything, and also looks terrific. She almost steals the show from the Ariadne, Anne Evans, who sings heroically, sculpturally, transplanting her famous Bayreuth Brünnhilde into the role.

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The piece has one outstanding problem, which may have encouraged its revision. It is too long: Sams even pots in a bit of repartee about the composer being "a surgeon, who makes cuts for the health of the whole body". Well, he is right; it needs to be an hour shorter.

But it certainly deserves to be seen. As well as real comic actors - Sam Kelly is a droll Jourdain - there is an ideal cast of singers, including a real Zerbinetta. This is one of the hardest roles to cast in all opera, for it has spine-tickling coloratura, sympathy and

pathos, and it needs a dancer and comedian as well. Lisa Saffer has everything, and also looks terrific. She almost steals the show from the Ariadne, Anne Evans, who sings heroically, sculpturally, transplanting her famous Bayreuth Brünnhilde into the role.

The adroit integration of comedy and epic is chiefly accomplished by the conducting of Richard Armstrong. He animates without hurrying, broadens without dragging,

Dance San Francisco Ballet

The Playhouse audience was practically steaming with excitement before the curtain went up on San Francisco Ballet on Tuesday. They haven't danced in Britain since 1981 and 16 years is a long time in a company's life. Many changes have been wrought in the interim.

San Francisco's ballet com-

pany was founded in 1933 and is the oldest professional ballet outfit in the US. It has had its ups and downs - artistically and financially - but in 1985 the former New York City Ballet principal Helgi Tomasson took over as artistic director. Since then they have enjoyed rave reviews for their strong technique and wide and handsome repertoire. Unfortunately, the works selected to showcase the company in Edinburgh did not always do his achievements justice.

Of the two programmes on offer the first, with its two Balanchine works, was by far the more popular and (for once) box-office instincts proved to be correct. It opened with the 1972 *Stravinsky Violin Concerto*. The many jumps are dashed off with so little fuss and preparation that the dancers seem to have been jerked from the floor by a length of elastic.

The evening closed with 1947's *Symphony in C*, which provoked the usual squeal of excitement when the audience got its first glimpse of 10 shimmering white tutus. Further thrills were generated by Yuan Yuao Tan in the adagio. Remarkable extensions and commanding balances contributed to a brilliant (if slightly inexpressive) performance.

The stale filling in this gourmet sandwich was Helgi Tomasson's *Sonata*, danced to Rachmaninov's soulful Sonata

certainly for Piano, Trumpet and Strings. Bintlley's theme is too big for him but his treatment of it never crass. He draws a parallel between the grassy nature of flesh and the short life of the professional dancer. At the ballet's close Death takes a class and the dancers struggle to copy his swift *enchainements* before dropping to the floor.

The second programme's highlight is Mark Morris's *Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes*, created for American Ballet Theatre in 1988 and danced to Virgil Thomson's Piano Etudes. Morris's easy, unravelling turns and casually brilliant *jetés* are a sunny manifestation of the fractured gaiety of the music. The stage is filled with couples propelled by a curious sense of purpose - as if every rush across the stage is a short-cut to a better place. The San Francisco dancers handled Mark Morris very well but they were obviously just visiting; with Balanchine, they seemed more comfortably at home.

Louise Levene

Theatre

Blue Heart

Blue Kettle, the second part of Caryl Churchill's dazzlingly theatrical double bill *Blue Heart*, must be the first play to use Enid Blyton's *The Faraway Tree* as a reference point. Derek, a 40-year-old man who is counting a series of susceptible women into believing they are his mother, visits his real mother in a geriatric ward. In the middle of this beautifully tender scene, he remembers his favourite childhood book, in which every time some children climbed a magic tree they visited a different land. It was a world bursting with delights and surprises, doubts and terrors, hopes and dreams.

Churchill's dramatic world is similarly full of possibilities. Unlike Blyton, however, her bold range is created via a supremely confident use of language and a pungent theatrical vocabulary. The form of the two interlocked plays is startlingly sophisticated yet leaves you wondering why no one has tried something so simple before. In *Hearts Desire*, a father, mother and aunt are waiting for a daughter to arrive home after years in Australia. It's like a

rapid dramatic version of the parlour game *Consequences*, with the characters constantly cutting back to the beginning and then supplying wildly different endings. At first you think you're in for a reinvention of Ionesco-style comic absurdity as the family indulge in soap opera argy bargy, but things turn increasingly surreal. One minute the audience is rocking with laughter at the sudden plunge into Agatha Christie - "It's nothing to do with any of us except that the body was found in our garden" - the next minute you're shocked into silence as the beautifully hallowed Mary Macleod, as the elderly Maisie, chillingly reveals the terror of waking up in the night afraid of dying.

The second half refracts and dislocates language in exactly the same way the first part does to action. A tiny shock jumps through the audience as Jasoo Watkins, as Derek, appears to trip over a word, substituting "blue" for "start". Then the word "kettle" crops up unannounced. Gradually, these two words creep in and consume the dialogue to the point of almost complete breakdown.

These dramatic devices could be dismissed as a typically barren exercise in deconstruction were it not for the fact that Churchill uses them to such extraordinary emotional effect. The more "blue" and "kettle" crowd speeches the more we are pulled into seeing the depth of the character's feelings and the links between them and Churchill's governing themes.

Anna Wing is almost unbearably moving as the fiercely pragmatic 80-year-old blue stocking who remains unable to express

emotion when meeting the man she believes to be her long lost child. Her performance is symptomatic of Max Stafford-Clark's scrupulous direction, which rivets every single moment to its emotional truth. His splendidly meticulous production is the perfect foil to the formal experimentation. Whether you're laughing at the sheer unabashed imagination of Churchill's vision or being caught short by its powerful emotional undertone, you realise that she has pulled off an exceedingly rare coup: she forces you to see that form and content are indivisible. In a climate where most playwrights think that structure and plot are the same thing and that compassion is a dirty word, watching *Blue Heart* is a captivating, heady pleasure.

Blue Heart is now showing at the Theatre, 30 Aug

David Benedict



San Francisco Ballet: first British appearance for 16 years

Gereint Lewis

creating a perfect framework for the varied styles of singing. The SO orchestra are at their best, fluent and colourful.

The casting is spot on. The three nymphs - Strauss's "Rhinemaidens" - blend spiritually, lustreously; they are Helen Williams, Claire Bradshaw and Anna-Claire Monk. There is a light, buoyant Harlequin (David Stephenson), and John Horton Murray sings the part of Bacchus in a boyish *Hedememor*.

Finally, on Wednesday night, the closing fireworks set off an alarm, and the audience left the theatre to be confronted by a row of fire engines. There could not have been a better example of the mingling of art and life; it added the finishing touch to an evening of almost perfect theatre.

Festival Theatre, tomorrow, 7.15pm, (booking: 0131-473 2200)

Raymond Monelle

pany was founded in 1933 and is the oldest professional ballet outfit in the US. It has had its ups and downs - artistically and financially - but in 1985 the former New York City Ballet principal Helgi Tomasson took over as artistic director.

Since then they have enjoyed rave reviews for their strong technique and wide and handsome repertoire. Unfortunately, the works selected to showcase the company in Edinburgh did not always do his achievements justice.

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The evening closed with

for Cello and Piano. In his eagerness to avoid a too obvious narrative, Tomasson has the seven dancers enact a scenario of romantic fulfilment and loss so vague and watery as to be without meaning entirely.

In the second programme, Tomasson indulged us with another of his works, *Crisis Cross*, in which 24 dancers doctored on Avison's arrangement of Scarlatti and Schoenberg (after Handel) dressed in mildly 18th-century clothes. Balanchine had a genius for subverting classical expectations with unexpected movements, snatches of slang that both enlivened his idiom and threw into relief the beauty of the classical style. Tomasson doesn't seem to have inherited this gift.

The second programme also featured David Bintley's *The Dance House*, a hideously-dressed work about death in general and AIDS in particular, danced to Shostakovich's Con-

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Lies, damned lies and statistics

Adrian Furnham wonders when science became journalism

Vital Lies, Simple Truths: the psychology of self-deception by Daniel Goleman, Bloomsbury, £16.99
Mind Reading: an investigation into how we learn to love and lie by Sanjida O'Connell, Heinemann, £16.99

Superficially, these books have something in common. Both are written by science journalists who here display rather more skill in the latter activity than the former. Both, misleadingly, have "lies" in the title and both aim to explain to the lay reader complicated semi-technical ideas in the social sciences. But neither succeeds in doing what Hawking and Penrose did for physics or Dawkins for biology.

Vital Lies, Simple Truths is written by the same author as last year's best-seller *Emotional Intelligence*. Is this book a rushed sequel? Alas, I am churlish enough to believe it is a prequel. There are 15 pages of references, but none goes beyond 1984. Lots of articles and unpublished papers are referenced around 1981-83, but nothing later. Did science

stop in Orwell's 1984? Does this matter? Yes – vitally, as it turns out. A question absolutely central to the theme of the book, concerning false memory or "recovered memory syndrome", blew up in the early Nineties – but is not discussed at all. The accusation of sexual abuse in childhood by adult children against parents is the current issue around "vital lies", but this book mentions nothing about it.

Vital Lies puts its thesis like this: "The mind can protect itself against anxiety by dimming awareness. This mechanism creates a blind spot: a zone of blocked attention and self-deception. Such blind spots occur at each major level of behaviour from the psychological to the social". Each of the six parts mixes scientific experiment and human-interest story; an excellent formula for popularity, as the previous book showed. This makes it easy to dip into, but does not help coherence. Goleman moves confidently from one research area to another; from neuro-

psychology through psychoanalysis to micro-sociology. The concept of "trade-off" litters the first half. He argues that there is a trade-off between attention and anxiety; we do not attend to stimuli of all sorts that provoke too much anxiety.

Taking us briskly through the cognitive psychology of the late Seventies, Goleman emphasises that perception is certainly not complete and may not be "conscious". Without knowing it, we scan, filter and select information. We see what we want to see.

The book then gets rather more clinical as it considers selective memory and that old Freudian chestnut, repression. "The ego, as Uncle Sigmund pointed out 100 years ago, is a great censor which controls and distorts information. We are all essentially self-deceivers. But now we have more scientific proof of the fact."

The last section becomes sociological. We move from the individual to group (family and organisation), remembering

and forgetting. Curiously, three sound-bites in the concluding section tell us that personal blind spots may indeed be vital lies because they have survival value. In the face of unpalatable truths, it is fairly natural to try a little self-deception.

The author was a magazine editor, and it shows. His knowledge base is broad rather than deep and he is better at describing research findings than at critically evaluating them. He writes well, and is even on the lookout for themes, segues and stories to support his fundamentally correct, if not new, theme.

Sanjida O'Connell's *Mind Reading* could never be accused of being old-hat or out-of-date. A number of references (there are 15 pages of them) specify "in press" or "in prep". Indeed, the book does deal with one of the most currently "sexy" ideas in the biological and social sciences. The subtitle, however, is misleading: there are four references to lying in the index, and none elsewhere.

O'Connell's key phrase is Theory of Mind (ToM) – the ability to read other people, to understand their emotions, beliefs and expectations, and hence to predict their behaviour. Problems with ToM have been suggested as the underlying cause of the deeply debilitating psychological illnesses of autism and schizophrenia.

The author is a television producer and ex-primatologist who worked on chimpanzees; she has also written a novel called *Theory of Mind*. (There are in fact more references to chimpanzees than to children in her book.) O'Connell writes well and paces the work smartly. But the book has some of the problems of television science presentation; it jumps around too much. Chapters are incoherent and there are a number of inaccuracies in the reporting of empirical work. (I checked this out with two colleagues cited by O'Connell, and they independently said the same thing.)

Once again, we have a straightforward theme which is threaded through a disparate literature. If you don't understand novels or plays, it's because you can't understand motives or intentions. With-out a ToM, you can't empathise. Equally, the better your ToM, the better you can lie, cheat and love!

But the theme is too dissipated, because the issue – empathy – is itself too big. The topic is sold well for the lay reader, but with too much generalisation and emphasis on peripheral, if interesting, studies that seem to confirm the thesis. It's all too inductive trying to infer general laws and universal truths on the basis of a gamut of experimental results, personal observations and good stories.

Do I have a ToM about O'Connell's motives for writing the book? Money, fame, narcissism? The author is clearly committed to her topic, but the trouble with people who get really excited by scientific concepts is that they find the concept can miraculously explain just about everything. And that is the point at which science becomes journalism.

A heavyweight who always won on pointes

Picasso, Stravinsky, Nijinsky: they all danced to the great impresario's tune. Michael Church searches for his secret

Speaking of Diaghilev by John Drummond, Faber, £20

Diaghilev died in 1929. In 1967 John Drummond persuaded 22 Ballet Russes survivors to speak about him on film. Thirty years on, Drummond has transcribed their interviews for a book, which thus represents a double time-war. It begins oddly, with a series of swipes at long-dead BBC colleagues who failed to appreciate Drummond's youthful genius, and with an astonishingly personal attack on the dance critic Richard Buckle, his adviser for the film.

Buckle is the author of what is generally regarded as the definitive Diaghilev biography. This Drummond condemns as containing too much fact and "too little judgment". He acknowledges the scale of the Diaghilev industry, but justifies this new contribution to it by claiming that key questions have yet to be posed.

Diaghilev was the supreme collector and shaper of talents, enthusing Picasso and Cocteau and presenting to the world Stravinsky and Satie, Benois and Bakst, plus a host of dancers. Wagner may have been the first exponent of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* – the fusion of music, drama, and spectacle – but what this Russian impresario did with music, dance, and visual art was no less original. After much huffing and puffing about "the nature of authority", Drummond's unposed questions boil down to one simple one: how did he do it?

Of course we'd like to know, but most of us have long assumed we never shall. Art is mysterious, and collaborative creation particularly so. In a letter to his stepmother, Diaghilev himself acknowledged the mystery: "I am, first, a great charlatan, though with dash; second a great charmer, third cheeky, fourth a person with a lot of logic and few principles, and fifth, someone afflicted, it seems, with a complete absence of talent." Setting aside that last defect – which referred to his failure as a composer – his self-diagnosis is still the best to date.

Can Drummond do better? To be frank – and his pre-emptive arrogance demands nothing less – the answer is no. *Speaking of Diaghilev* leaves the mystery virginally intact.

But there are still nuggets to be mined from these unedited conversations, provided you overlook the ploddingly uncut questions which punctuate the text. Provided, also, that you don't mind being told endlessly about Diaghilev's grey suits, gliding gait, frightening aloofness and fear of water, and the enormous size of his head.

Some descriptions are evocative. His laugh was "like thunder rolling around"; his handshake was so soft that "you seemed to disappear into it".

When, surrounded by acolytes, he made his entrance into a restaurant, "it was like a ship entering a harbour, with little ships around him". For Karavina he had the lazy grace of a sea-lion. For Cecil Beaton he had a mouth like a shark, and "a marvellous poreless complexion".

We gather a lot about the control he exerted over his company by alternating cruelty and kindness. We get some sense of his magic ability to seem boundlessly rich, while possessing little more than the clothes he stood up in.

Every so often, an anecdote illuminates a work. Serge Lifar's *Prodigal Son* was so effective because it coincided with the errant dancer's private reconciliation with his master. Sokolova's description of what it felt like to dance *L'après-midi d'un faune* – "pushing your hands forward from the wrist" – speaks volumes.

We learn from the composer Igor Markevitch how deeply Diaghilev immersed himself in the scores he commissioned. His interventions were so forceful that Markevitch found it "very difficult to know exactly who was the creator". The composer Nicholas Nabokov, speaks of his infallible musical intuition, and gets closer than anyone else to identifying the quality of risk which infused everything Diaghilev did. This, says Nabokov, derived from the fact that "he was perhaps the first grand homosexual who asserted himself and was accepted as such by society".

But *Speaking of Diaghilev* is really three books, not one. The second recounts Drummond's pursuit of his sacred monsters and their fascinating reactions to him. Some screw him for every penny they can; some become his devoted friends; some deliver monumental snubs, which he reports in masochistic detail.

The third book, in the form of an extended afterword, is the least satisfactory, being the autobiography of a balletomane who is also one of the most powerful arts grandees in Britain. Drummond is properly contemptuous of what passes these days for innovation, and shows why Diaghilev would not have been happy running the Royal Ballet. But he also has scores to settle and alliances to cement, and seems incapable of disentangling these from the serious points he wants to make about the condition of dance today. Did this book not have an editor?

Between a literary amateur like Drummond, who lets it all hang out, and a professional like Richard Buckle, who keeps his eye on the ball, there is no comparison. *Speaking of Diaghilev* is a patchy and querulous postscript to Buckle's magnificent *Diaghilev* (Weidenfeld, £14.99, and still in print). That's the book to get hold of.



The thriving swan: Anna Pavlova, who danced for Diaghilev's 'Ballet Russes'

PHOTOGRAPH: MANDER AND MITCHELSON

Go gentle into that good night

Jonathan Sale enjoys a final date with 29.4.20

Mind How You Go by Edward Blishen, Constable, £16.95

The good news for all readers who enjoyed *A Kack-handed War*, *Uncommon Entrance* and other autobiographical volumes by Edward Blishen: here is another volume. The bad news could be deduced from Blishen's obituary earlier this year: it's his last. It ends with the words "You might die," and indeed he did. Yet he remained a real pro to the last. His manuscript was completed just before the arrival of the undertakers. And the prose, though written against the clock (or scythe), is as polished and witty as before.

As presenter of countless liter-

ary programmes on radio, he knows how words sound in your ear and mind. Any celebrities threatening to write *My Life as Host of Pets Win Supermarket Lotteries* should be beaten about the cranium with *Mind How You Go* until they have mastered at least some of the Blishen skills.

Admittedly, earlier books had more action. He was for 12 years at the mercy of schoolchildren and for five thrown around by the

fortunes of war – or, in his case, of pacifism. In this terminal volume, he is teased about by the whims of hospitals and, among other parts of the body, by his bladder. So many doctors ask for his date of birth to pop into their forms that he becomes a perpetual birthday boy: "I was rapidly slipping into being 29.4.20."

This contrasts with the medical facilities on offer during his childhood. His mother used to take

him to sniff the local gasometer, a process which she fondly believed to have therapeutic qualities. Since Edward's baby brother died following a misdiagnosis, her medical knowledge was no less convincing than what the hospitals of the pre-Welfare State days had to offer.

As that suggests, Blishen juggles memories of childhood and old age, recollections of seven with 70. His friends turn up as

boys and as senior citizens. He is here tying up loose ends and balancing his books. Without in any way being maudlin or self-pitying, it is his way of going gentle into the good night.

This is not to say that the guilty go free. In an unexpectedly hilarious episode – his wife breaks a leg on a Tenerife holiday – he describes the private clinic from hell, so anxious to hang on to patients' fees that the elderly

couple practically have to dig their way out. *Last Of The Summer Wine* meets *The Wooden Horse*. Who would have thought that anyone could make his own cataract operation, and bladder and bowel probes, quite so entertaining?

As a broadcaster, Blishen belonged to the pre-Dalek, pre-digital era. Now he has gone to the Great Studio in the Sky, where the knobs are not twiddled by irrational accountants and where any executive using the words "producer choice" is shoved into the burning fiery pit below. He leaves us this 250-page last will and testament, as if to say, "...and to my readers, I bequeath a few final memories." RIP.

Monday
Tuesday
Wednesday
Thursday
Friday
Saturday
Sunday

A
WEEK
IN
BOOKS



BOYD TONKIN

In their bare-fanged beyday, the Thatcherites used to claim that competition – however stiff – would always have a tonic, not a toxic, impact on rival traders. Does the same apply to books? Within a matter of weeks, the massed biographers of Jane Austen will learn the hard truth as Maggie McKernan, David Nokes and Claire Tomalin all add their oen lives of Jane to the pile begun a few months ago by Valerie Grosvenor Myer. This triple whammy only goes to show that, for all the doomy talk about hard-faced hatchet-persons in power suits, there's still a lot more sensibility than sense in publishing today.

Biographies – especially of writers – seem peculiarly prone to this bust-stop effect. You wait for a couple of decades, and then two, three or (in George Eliot's case) four all come along more or less at once. Why should this happen? On one side, TV and film adaptations, expanding reprint lists and the ever-grinding education industry do successfully carry the classics to fresh cohorts of readers. On the other, older "standard" works start to feel musty and remote as the culture changes – most notably, in the direction of sexual frankness – and research unearths the sort of evidence to turn yesterday's angel into tomorrow's demon (or even vice versa). And, of course, death loosens the tongues of foe as well as friend – although Samuel Beckett emerged as lovable as ever from James Knowlson's and Antony Cronin's recent lives.

If biographers must elude, better to tread rapidly on one another's toes, as the Janeites will. That at least permits a fair comparison. When one life steals a march on its peers, it becomes almost impossible for the straggler(s) to capture the same territory on review pages and bookstore tables. There's little wrong with Stephen Coote's and Keith Aldritt's assured new biographies of WB Yeats (from Hodder and John Murray respectively) beyond the cruel fact that the first part of Roy Foster's epic authorised version broke the tape back in January.

In the spring, we reviewed (at some length) Jon Lee Anderson's biography of Che Guevara, shot in the Bolivian jungle 30 years ago. This autumn, should Jorge Castañeda's equally substantial tome – which draws on a broader spread of sceptical and hostile sources – command the same level of coverage for the hushy icon? If not, what about Henry Ryan's study of the urbane guerrilla, due in early 1998? When exactly should we draw a line and say "That's Enough Che (Ed)"?

These snarl-ups and tailbacks do prove that publishers often have precious little grasp of one another's plans. This is not (yet) a planned economy. For the moment, literary sleuths will go on shadowing their rivals' paths like eelers from some opaque yarn by Henry James.

Two distinguished contributors to these pages are working on lives of the same revered figure in post-war European literature. They have visited the same sites, consulted the same archives, sought memories from the same frail relatives. They baunt each other for their tragic and heroic quarry haunts them. Yet, so far, they have never met. And, probably they never will, until their jackets touch on bookshop shelves.



Basil Rathbone (Sherlock Holmes) and Nigel Bruce (Dr Watson) in MGM's 1939 'Hound of the Baskervilles'

RONALD GRANT ARCHIVE

From diagnosis to deduction

How did a stolid medic invent modern crime fiction? P D James looks for clues

The Doctor, the Detective and Arthur Conan Doyle by Martin Booth, Hodder & Stoughton, £20

A casual glance at the main events of the life of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle can leave the enquirer with the stereotype of a Victorian gentleman adventurer, either in fact or fiction: patriotic, egregiously brave, given to war-like valour and foreign adventures; a notable sportsman, self-opinionated, obstinate, occasionally pompous, chivalrous and faithful in love, honourable and loyal. Even his early life conforms to the tradition of the self-made man struggling through early deprivation to honour and success. His father was an irresponsible drunkard and it was his mother, Mary Doyle, who was the most important single influence in her son's early life. She gave him her own love of history and literature, her instinct for story-telling and her insistence on honour and fair play. He struggled through five years of medical training and then set up in practice before finding his true and, finally, lucrative profession as an author.

But he was a more complex – indeed, enigmatic and in some respects contradictory – character than a recital of his qualities would suggest. Throughout his life he vigorously fought against injustice wherever he saw it, whether overseas in the Belgian Congo, or at home. Although no friend of female suffrage, he advocated reform of the divorce laws which he rightly saw as prejudiced in favour of men, and he campaigned vigorously and successfully on behalf of prisoners whom he considered had been wrongly convicted, notably Oscar Slater in 1912.

being the victim of charlatans. At the end of his life he forfeited money, goodwill and admiration by his belief in fairies, taken in by a photograph which was little more than a childish hoax.

It was a full and interesting life, well lived, but it is doubtful whether either his virtues or his eccentricities would have justified this or previous biographies were it not for his creation of a single fictional character, Sherlock Holmes. This is not a judgement which would have afforded satisfaction to Conan Doyle. In placing this achievement in relation to the author's life, Martin Booth has had to rely on previously published records and material, since for some decades biographers have been denied access to Conan Doyle's private papers. Given this prohibition it would be unreasonable to expect new insights and fresh discoveries. Booth has written a conscientious and comprehensive account of his subject's life from the material available; if we wish to find our way to the essential man, we need look little further than his work.

Sherlock Holmes could be said to have been born on 8 March 1886 when Conan Doyle began writing a novelette. It was first entitled *A Tangled Skein*, later changed to *A Study in Scarlet*: "the scarlet thread of murder running through the colourless skein of life". The novelette, initially rejected by a number of publishers, was finally sold outright to Ward Lock for £25. It was an unpropitious appearance of the first major serial character in British fiction, and one who, through his author's astonishing success, was fundamentally to influence the direction of the modern detective story.

Conan Doyle was fortunate both in his timing – there was a burgeoning middle-class reading public avid for exciting fiction – and in his association from 1891 with the newly published *Strand Magazine* with George Newnes as its proprietor. The magazine was

an immediate success, the first issue selling over 300,000 copies. Editorial policy dictated an illustration on every page, and the Sherlock Holmes stories were allocated their own artist, Sidney Paget, whose vivid line drawings perfectly complemented the character, and whose illustrations are still the definitive picture of Sherlock Holmes.

The stories were sensationally popular. Queues formed at newsstands on publication day, and Sherlock Holmes quickly became what he remains today: a household name.

The success of the Sherlock Holmes stories is not difficult to explain. They were exciting, dramatic and suspenseful. The two main characters, Holmes and Dr Watson, were contrasting individuals with whom the readers could identify. And in Holmes, Conan Doyle had created the archetypal hero who was nevertheless a true original; brilliantly clever, courageous, eccentric, physically compelling, and the possessor "of the most perfect reasoning and observing machine the world has ever seen".

The plots of the Holmes stories are ingenious but hardly credible. And Conan Doyle was careless about details. The dog that didn't bark in the night is mysterious, but less so than Dr Watson's dog, which disappeared completely. Inspector Lestrade changes his appearance dramatically between *A Study in Scarlet* and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The chronology is sometimes confused, parts of London are inaccurately described, and the writing is occasionally slapdash.

None of this worried either Conan Doyle or his readers. A modern crime writer could wish that readers today were so accommodating. As the author wrote of the short stories: "Accuracy of detail matters little. I have never striven for it and have made some bad mistakes in consequence. What matters is that I hold my readers." He did hold them, and he does so still.

Eminent Victorian

Gabriel Josipovici locates a sage in his time

Erata: an examined life by George Steiner, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £11.99

George Steiner's criticism has always striven for grand impersonality, but what has made it interesting has been precisely the flavour it conveys of barely concealed personality. At the end of an essay by Steiner, one's tendency is not to say: how true! but: how does he manage to know so much, to write with such panache? Now, at last, he has produced a book in which he promises to speak of those things that have made him who and what he is.

The first chapters do not disappoint. They take one from his early childhood in Austria to his brief sojourn in France and on to the French Lycée in Manhattan and the University of Chicago. In a marvellous section he describes how his father coaxed him into reading Homer in Greek and left him with an abiding passion for the classics of Western civilisation. A banker by necessity, he was, according to his son, the epitome of the cultured Viennese Jew: "His learning was extensive and exact... Investment banking occupied most of his outward existence. At the core, it left him almost indifferent. From this tension came his uncompromising resolve that his son should know next to nothing of his father's profession... I was to be a teacher and a thorough scholar."

Yet Steiner is half aware that this has been, for him, a mixed blessing. "The cost of this early incision of the classical into my existence has been considerable," he says, and comes back to it at the close, when meditating on the state of our culture at the end of the millennium. I am not sure, though, if he quite realises the degree to which the early influence of his remarkable father has made him what he is, and how even his unease with his inheritance is itself so clearly the mark of one imbued with the culture of 19th-century Germany and Austria.

There is, first of all, the need to inform and persuade, the passion of the teacher, which has always been an integral part of Steiner's writing. I could have done with less of it here, since after the fascinating chapters on his youth and education he ceases to talk about his own life and

instead gives us what are in effect summaries of his long-held views: on Jewishness and the state of Israel; on music; on language; on the fateful collision of new and old in late-20th-century culture.

These are of course central issues, to put it mildly, but I would have preferred him to proceed in the personal vein of the opening chapters. Nevertheless, they all help one to see to how large an extent Steiner's view of things is conditioned by his upbringing. His concern with both language and music has, as he recognises, its roots in

others acclaim as "the new age". There is too much I have grasped too late in the day. Too often my activity as a writer and teacher, as a critic and scholar, has been, consciously or not, an in memoriam, a curatorship of remembrance.

What Steiner does not seem to see is that this very plangency, this apocalyptic note, is itself typical of German culture of the late bourgeois period. He could have been quoting from Wittgenstein's *Culture and Value* or Thomas Mann's *Dr Faustus*.

But does the contrast have to be between Brahms and rock, between a profound love of the 19th century and an irresponsible embracing of chaos? Much of the finest art of our century has in fact simply sidestepped the terms in which such a debate has been conducted among those steeped in Germanic culture. There is a combination of lightness and depth in Stravinsky, an elemental quality about Birtwistle or Henry Moore, which owes little to the 19th century and yet is far from the crudities of pop culture or the cynical knowingness of post-modernism. Steiner ignores this and goes on asking his large and serious, his very Germanic questions. How can culture and barbarism coexist? Where are we going? And so on.

Towards the end a strange tone surfaces, as Steiner returns again and again to the assertion that he has not achieved the recognition he deserves and that his work has been consistently plagiarised. At the same time, sometimes in the same sentence, he manages to hint at how immensely successful he has been. How can he doubt that the latter is the truth? He is widely regarded as the foremost cultural critic of his day. And yet his sense of having been betrayed – by his country and city of adoption, by his former pupils – is also very Viennese-Jewish: it is to be found on almost every page of Schoenberg's letters.

But then so is the generosity of spirit which shines through much of this book – the simple enthusiasm for great achievements in whatever field, the warmth of his homage to those who made him what he is. And that is the true George Steiner, though I suppose it is in the nature of things that he should not always be aware of this as his readers.



Viennese world: George Steiner, champion of the classics and *The Classic*, in full flight PHOTOGRAPH TOM PILSTON

his rootlessness, in his trilingualism and his sense of being between at least three cultures. But his sense of musical history, too, is culturally specific. It would have been shared by Schoenberg and Wittgenstein and Adorno, but not, say, by Stravinsky or Berio or Birtwistle. This history has its apex in Beethoven and Brahms, not in Ockeghem or African drumming.

Steiner blames his education, with its stress on the worship of the classics and *The Classic*, for not having allowed him to grasp fully what has been happening in our time. "It is the ebbing of ideals and performative hierarchies instrumental since the pre-Socratics, which define what I have called 'the epilogue' but which

The one that got away

Dea Birkett goes fishing with an evergreen grande dame

The Nine Lives of Naomi Mitchison by Jenni Calder, Virago, £20

What is it about Naomi Mitchison? There seems so much meat in her champagne-socialist life for a good, gutsy biography, pointing to her roots in the Fabianism and feminism of the first half of this century. But, like a female Laurens van der Post, Mitchison has attracted unquestioning awe rather than analysis. When she celebrates her 100th birthday in November, she should be thankful that for a century the critical hounds have been kept at bay.

In the first full account of her life, biographer Jill Benton confessed she was a "passionate student" of Naomi's, "bent on honouring the lives of those accomplished women writers short-changed by literary history" – on which list, of course, Mitchison was high. In Jenni Calder, the Scottish matriarch has another biographer who is also neither detective nor detractor but a devoted disciple. From the outset, Calder clearly draws the line between her subject and us ordinary mortals. "For Naomi Mitchison living has meant not existing, enduring, putting up with, compromising." For her, life has been "adventuring, protesting, galvanising others."

Naomi Mitchison's life is a testament to unbounded energy. She has written more than 80 books, as well as plays, poems, and articles. Her first novel, *The Conqueror*, was reportedly drafted on a board resting on her son's pram as she pushed him along the Embankment. She had five surviving children by her patient husband, Dick. She collected lovers as other upper-middle-class women collect fine china. She fought for contraception, nuclear disarmament and fishermen's rights.

In her forties, she bought Carradale House on the Mull of Kintyre and became laird of a Scottish village; in her sixties, she became the "mother"



Woman of the century: the uncompromising Naomi Mitchison, pictured at the age of 16 in 1913 (top) and more recently

of a Botswanan tribe. This far-reaching life begs for a soupçon of analysis: a society hostess and committed socialist, both battling against and benefiting from class privilege. But any hint of such contradictions is glossed over. "Although professing a lack of interest in possessions," Calder writes, and said to share EM

Forster's belief that ownership was "the wickedest thing in the universe", Naomi went to Sotheby's and Christie's to buy furniture for her new home. On this, Calder offers no comment.

But Calder's biggest blind spot is in refusing to question Mitchison's claim to be embraced by classes and cultures other than her own. At Carradale, according to Calder, the new laird immediately fell in with the local fishermen. Her evidence for this comes from Mitchison's own poetry, but was this truth masked as fiction, or simply wishful thinking?

In the early Eighties, I wrote to the laird of Carradale asking if I might visit. Like Benton and Calder, I wanted to meet a woman I admired. She invited me for the weekend, and I pitched my one-woman tent in her substantial grounds. During my stay, an expedition was organised to go salmon fishing. We were all issued with wellingtons and waterproofs and told to rendezvous at the back door. Naomi Mitchison, several members of her huge family and myself tramped down to the beach. We stood by while three local fishermen went out in their boat, trawled their net, caught a fish, and brought it back to the shore, where they bludgeoned it to death at their laird's feet. We all walked back to the Big House. Not even the tips of my wellingtons were wet. The next evening we ate the salmon at the grand table, congratulating ourselves on our fine catch. In the Eighties, people still dressed for dinner at Carradale. "Did you enjoy salmon fishing?" someone asked. No one seemed to be aware of the irony.

Such details are not dwelt upon by Calder. She outlines Mitchison's unfailingly successful attempts to be part of communities to which she is a natural outsider. This member of the distinguished Haldane family is said to have blended in beautifully with life at a village in Botswana: "She was soon one of them, a Mokgata, and the 'we' of all her writing about

Botswana confidently asserts her African identity." Buried in this hagiography, there is a tiny clue to another Naomi Mitchison, in a throwaway remark made by one of her children. She has never known her mother to go for a walk on her own. Above all, it seems, Naomi Mitchison – an irrepressible "I" – has wanted to be part of a "we".

PAPERBACKS



by Christopher Hirst
and Emma Hagestadt

Demonic Males by Richard Wrangham and Dale Peterson (Bloomsbury, £7.99) This enthralling investigation into the "vicious, lethal aggression" endemic in human males begins with a devastating comparison of Rwandan genocide with butchery in chimpanzee communities. The parallels are described as "unsettling", particularly in light of the discovery that chimpanzees are more closely related to humans than to gorillas. The authors convincingly argue against determinism but appear optimistic in their insistence that the acquisition of wisdom can "draw us away from the five-million year stain of our ape past".

Inventing the Abbotts by Sue Miller (Indigo, £5.99) Best known for her novel *The Good Mother*, Sue Miller continues to explore the perils of single-motherhood in her short stories – sex with a new partner while the baby snoozes being one of her favoured themes. In one story a 37-year-old mother inadvisably gets out erotic snapshots of her younger, more nubile self to show to a new lover, while in "Expensive Gifts", a woman who begins the night in bed with an unfamiliar man ends it snuggled up to her two-year-old son. In this titillating, readable collection, only the book's title story, about two brothers' obsession with a family of sisters, fails to pack a punch.

Racing Pigs and Giant Marrows by Harry Pearson (Abacus, £5.99) Like the naughty boy in every class, Pearson can't stop cracking jokes. This account of 25 North Country shows, ranging from the Appleby Horse Fair to the Egton Gooseberry Fair, is packed with gags. Fortunately, they're very good ones, such as the way that a crab sandwich, left in Tupperware for an hour, produces "the nauseating stench of a Russian factory ship becalmed in the Indian ocean with a faulty refrigeration system". This book is a joy and a treasure.

In the Garden of Desire by Wendy Maltz and Susie Boss (Bantam, £9.99) In this survey of the sexual fantasies of more than 100 American women, one of the participants remarks: "Fantasies don't fart, suffer exhaustion or leave balled-up socks on the floor." Unlike their male counterparts, female fantasies tend to be complex narratives: "I imagine I'm a meditation student using a secluded ashram in the woods..." Six common fantasy roles include Victim, Dominatrix and Voyeur. As the authors note, "We don't have to like fantasy for it to provide a positive function."

Portofino by Frank Schaeffer (Black Swan, £6.99) Eyes fixed on his three slices of tuna, three slices of salami, four olives and round of mortadella, young Calvin Becker prays that the rest of the *pensione* won't notice his mother saying grace. Just one of the countless embarrassing moments recalled in Schaeffer's semi-autobiographical novel remembering Sixties holidays on the Italian Riviera with his American missionary parents. A novel that glows with sentiment and cheap red wine.

AUDIOBOOKS



I am made uneasy by any form of writing which cannot be spoken aloud", says Laurie Lee in "True

Adventures of a Boy Reader, the first of the stories that make up *I Can't Stay Long* (Isis, 2hrs 30mins, £8.99). He was, he explains, the inheritor of an oral tradition of language – "a vocabulary small though naturally virile, the words ancient, round and warm to the tongue." How he discovered the "power and glory, persuasive magic and ready gift of hallucination" of books, and moved from Defoe, Bunyan and Swift to the moderns, explains the genesis of his sturdy romantic style. Appropriately, his own voice redoubles its charm.

The lilting alliteration of J.R.R. Tolkien's translation of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (HarperCollins, 2hrs 30mins, £8.99) makes no easy task for the reader, but Terry Jones, a medievalist as well as an actor, tackles it gamely.

Christina Hardyment

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A regular guy, lost in love's labyrinth

Penelope Lively follows a gifted yarn-spinner into the masculine maze

Larry's Party by Carol Shields,
Fourth Estate, £16.99

Carol Shields has always been a wonderful manipulator of structure in her fiction. She plays around with the conventions of linear narrative and then delivers some arresting brew of her own. *The Stone Diaries* served up a whole range of evidence about the life of its protagonist. *Happstance* sliced a marriage and gave the wife's point of view, and then the husband's. *Mary Swann* – a particular favourite with me – hid its dead woman poet behind the obsessive manoeuvrings of her admirers, juggled with evidence again and even supplied persuasive poetry somewhere after Emily Dickinson.

Shields also has a corner in esoteric occupations thoroughly researched. By the end of *Happstance*, you knew a lot of interesting stuff about quilt-making. *The Republic of Love* filled you in on

mermaid mythology. The hero of *Larry's Party*, true to form, is a designer of garden mazes and the story of his life is told in a way that is circular and circumstantial, linear only in the sense that it homes in on him at carefully selected moments.

What all this amounts to is that Carol Shields has thought far more intently than do most novelists about this tricky, seminal and often betraying matter of the selection of evidence. Why tell the reader this rather than that? Her fiction is a cunning tapestry of judiciously chosen threads. You won't see the pattern until the very last moment, when you stand back and look.

Larry's Party ends with just that: the party at which the various elements of his life are brought together for a triumphant dénouement. "What's it like being a man these days?" someone asks: a flip, dinner-party remark which then prompts some heartfelt alcoholic comment and also serves as the focus of the entire novel.

This is a book about what it is like to be a man at this point in time – or rather, to be a Canadian floral designer (who thinks that he may be, just probably, a little banal) as interpreted by a shrewd woman novelist.

Larry Weller was not particularly bright at school. His reflections on his own possible banality arise when he first comes across the word, at a time when he is obsessed with the fact that he is semantically deprived – "the empty white echo he sometimes bears can be calmed by words". When he left school, his mother enquired about a course in furnace repair but the local college sent the brochure on floral arts by mistake: a nice conjunction of banpeastance and linguistic confusion.

Larry is not banal, in the sense that no one is. He could be seen as ordinary – he has no particular distinction of mind, no great powers of perception – but in the hands of his sympathetic creator he

becomes a kind of archetype. He is decent, striving and perplexed. This perplexity lies at the heart of things and informs his erratic progress through two marriages and a further relationship until the final watershed. He moves from his first love, sprightly, feisty Dorrie, to Beth, herself something of an archetype: a self-absorbed Eighties woman writing a doctoral thesis on women saints (a quintessential Shields touch, that), who quotes Donne in bed. Women dominate the book, even if it is a man's story – and very properly so, since the questions of gender and the shifting balance between the sexes are the matters at issue.

There are no easy answers here; this is not prescriptive writing. Larry's story is not offered as some salutary tale of what happened to Western men in the last quarter of the 20th century but rather as a reflection of how one such may have perceived his problems. And a convincing account it is too, quite blowing apart

that rigid notion that women cannot write of men (or vice versa, for that matter). Through Larry's eyes and by way of his experience we sample all the daftness of existence alongside the significant themes in his life: the moment when he walks out on his first marriage, his feelings for his son, his unexpected advance as a fashionable designer of mazes for wealthy patrons.

The concept of the maze features prominently – both symbolic (perhaps a bit befuddling) and practical. Early on, Larry goes through some sort of mystical experience in the Hampton Court maze. This came across as somewhat baffling, but I suppose that mystical events are just that. At any rate, the moment discomposes him and acts also as a directive. From then on, maze theory will become an obsession, powering the twists and loops of Larry's progress and lending an idiosyncratic spin to this clever and beguiling novel.



Mary Ellen Mark's spine-chilling picture of a snake charmer with his son, outside Delhi (1981), comes from 'India: a Celebration of Independence', edited by Victor Anant (Aperture, £35), a panoramic survey of the nation by great photographers, from Cartier-Bresson to Salgado

The regeneration game

This month, the Penguin Group launches a trio of "hip" young novels for the twentysomething readership. A venerable media conglomerate like Penguin is hardly noted for being out there as a publisher. So in order to reposition itself, Penguin is promoting these novels as "New Brit Lit", trailing them with vogueish buzzwords and decking the pack of proof copies in a Union Jack. Very Cool Britain!

Although I half expected one of the novels to feature an Oasis song for a title, it is in fact the Spice Girls who are referenced. Apparently, Girl Power is all that *Camden Girls* (Penguin, £6.99) really want. Jane Owen's debut novel features a crew of horny, lycra-clad boozing babes on the prowl in North London's coolest quarter.

Junio is young, free and single. She is a beautiful, middle-class loafer who, between gatecrashing the very best parties and dealing drugs to music business types, simply lives for having a good time with no strings attached. "Oh for a man honest enough to just say I'd like to shag you and see you again."

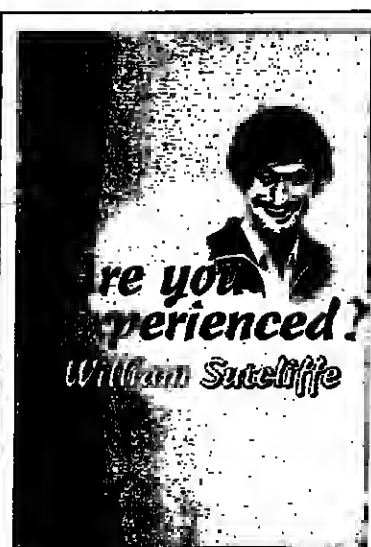
During a long, hot summer weekend of girl mayhem, Junio stops to wonder if she's a bit on the shallow side. Trying to locate the motivating force in her life, she quickly rules out religion, ambition, good works, even love: "the only thing I really enjoy nowadays is doing drugs."

The lurking tone of moral censure in *Camden Girls* turns full on in *Wasted* (Penguin £6.99). Krissy Kays' first novel finds young people of today to be aimless, selfish, and constantly off their heads – a generation lost to chemicals, adrift in a joyless and alienating London. Starting with a drug-related fatality at a pop music festival, *Wasted* ends with Saul, the leading character, giving up cocaine and heading for India to search for the meaning of life. Too much fun, suggests Kays, and not nearly enough utilitarian striving, is very bad for the soul.

Such disapproval prevents Kays from conveying the thrill or euphoria of

INDEPENDENT CHOICE

Laurence O'Toole
scans BritLit for
a wicked hit



Pick of the week

Are You Experienced?
by William Sutcliffe

pleasure, or from writing in a style which reflects the experiences of her characters. In recent times, the fusion of new leisure technologies – drugs, dance music, computers and videogames – has had a considerable influence on the shape of British art, fashion and advertising, as well as on the popular fiction of writers such as Alan Warner, Bridget O'Connor and Stewart Home, with their varied experiments in non-linear narrative forms.

Even the old fashioned, boozy *Camden Girls* makes some stab at expanding the reader's mind, dropping the occasional fragment of stream-of-consciousness into the mix. Going into a rave, Junio abstains from using any punctuation for a while. "Let it go now just feel the music feel the power in all these people we are family." I suppose even William Burroughs had to start somewhere.

These difficult questions of style don't really come up with *Are You Experienced?* (Hamish Hamilton, £9.99), the third and the best of these novels. Where *Wasted* ends with Saul leaving for India, William Sutcliffe's second novel opens with Dave and Liz already on the plane, bound for New Delhi.

During her year off before starting college Liz is hoping to find spiritual meaning in the subcontinent, whilst Dave, being of a more materialist persuasion, is hoping finally to get Liz to have sex with him.

What he in fact gets is all the high-grade dope he can handle, and vicarious diarrhoea. In turn, Liz comes to realise that she can't stand Dave, dumping him for a charlatan holy man and tantric sex. She also takes to wearing saris and bug-ging street beggars.

Are You Experienced? is a comic novel of oneupmanship and bickering between young people desperate to be liked by each other. It is therefore both very modern and timeless.

Wisely, Sutcliffe doesn't try to be so trendy, or to catch the mood of a generation. Instead, he deploys a fine talent for social satire, brilliantly, if bizarrely, relocating the screwball comedies of Thirties Hollywood to the hippy trail of the Nineties, where young backpackers trek through "India" mainly as a character-building experience to put on their CVs, and the truly sacred text is not *The Bhagavad Gita* but *The Lonely Planet Guide*. Here, beneath the hype of a wonderfully tilt for fashionability, lies a wonderfully acute, heartfelt, even "wicked" – piece of new fiction.

Cargo of despair

Fraser Harrison takes the Middle Passage and laments man's inhumanity to man

Feeding the Ghosts by Fred D'Aguiar,
Chatto & Windus, £14.99

Disease is running riot on the slave ship Zong as it plies the middle passage between West Africa and Jamaica. The captain decides to protect his healthy cargo by slinging overboard the infected "pieces". In this way he plans to halt the disease, save rations and preserve a profitable ratio of the ship's "holdings".

He is confident he will recover the value of his losses from the insurers back in London. He orders his crew to throw overboard 132 pieces of "stock" – men, women and children plucked out of the hold and marked as strokes in his meticulous register before being namelessly dropped into the sea and the void of history.

One of the slaves, Mintah – condemned to death for insolence rather than infirmity – manages to climb back on board. With the help of the cook's assistant she not only stays alive to lead an abortive rebellion, but finds pen and paper and writes a journal of these dreadful events.

This document is produced in court when the suit for compensation is heard. Among other things, it reveals that one of the allegedly sick children had to be chased round the deck before she was caught and dumped in the waves. "Where is the necessity in the decision to dispose of her?" asks the lawyer for the insurers.

Fred D'Aguiar's third novel is derived from a true case, given much uncomfortable publicity by Granville Sharp, first chairman of the Quaker society for the abolition of slavery. D'Aguiar convincingly conjures up the appalling conditions in which newly captured slaves were imprisoned during their voyage to the West Indies. None of the white characters uses the word "slaves": they are invariably referred to as "stock". D'Aguiar further reinforces their loss of individuality by differentiating only Mintah.

The others are never more than anonymous pairs of eyes staring out of the fetid darkness in the hold. Their atrocious situa-

tion is mostly suggested by means of the crewmen's disgust at having to go below. There is a telling moment, as forceful as any account of rape or beating, when the first mate's lamp is nearly extinguished by lack of oxygen in the women's section. This is truly imaginative historical fiction.

The first part of the novel is more concerned with the slaves than with the slaves. It seems to be asking the age-old question: how can humans do this to each other? The white men are individualised, but only in so far as they vary in their reactions to the captain's orders. Some grumble a little, but all obey in the end.

The only man who shows compassion is the assistant cook, and he is a simpleton. The very fact that the slave trade flourished for so many years proves that our 18th-century ancestors, like those responsible for the Holocaust, behaved as D'Aguiar suggests: with unconcerned cruelty. Perhaps such people do not deserve deeper inspection. On the other hand, to dismiss them as sadists and buffoons is surely a mistake.

D'Aguiar depicts the judge in the insurance case, Lord Mansfield, as a man fonder of lunch than of justice who never recognises the barbarity of the case. The fact that this cartoon is unrepresentative of the historical Lord Mansfield does not matter, but what matters is that they are not committed to understand and other atrocities the harder to understand is that they are not committed people as well. Their mentality does therefore need to be explained.

The humanity of Mintah is set against the men's callousness, and if she occasionally seems too heroic and literary to be entirely credible, she is nonetheless a moving creation. D'Aguiar invests her with a poetic belief in herself as a kind of wood, whose grain will grow round the terrible knot of the voyage, allowing her to survive, her soul intact. The wood of her being is contrasted with the rapacity and indifference of the sea. And, his eloquence in full flight, D'Aguiar implies that there is always a Zong at sea somewhere.

travel & outdoors

Pack up your troubles...



Tessellation row: the Giant's Causeway is Antrim's biggest drawcard

PHOTOGRAPHS: CHRISTOPHER HILL

Far beyond Belfast's tensions lies one of the world's most spectacular coastlines – as Simon Calder discovers on a trip along the edge of Antrim

One hundred degrees? The thermometer may have climbed that high where you were this week, but on the coast of County Antrim the temperature stayed well within two Fahrenheit figures. Were there a scale for scenery, though, this shoreline would surely score higher than anywhere else in the kingdom. Two of the UK's most stunning pieces of coastal scenery are separated by seven miles. And between them lies an absurdly beautiful beach.

Yet this tableau is but the denouement of a story which begins much further south and west along the shore.

World travellers think they can list great coastal drives at the drop of a place name: Highway One in California, the Great Ocean Road in the Australian state of Victoria... They should add the A2 from Larne to Cushendall. For 25 miles, the road crouches between the land and the shore, leading you past a succession of scenes. First, ungainly suburbia; next, standard-issue, ultra-green Irish farmland; then brutal cliffs, through which the road occasionally drills. (Punctuating this tale of majesty, though, is a series of ragged urban settlements for which the clichés "quaint" and "charming" can remain safely stowed in the thesaurus.)

Not that the residents aren't friendly, mind. You know the sorts of organisations where a house rule insists that the phone is answered within four rings? The Northern Ireland Tourist Board appears to have a similar policy to help tourists. If any visitor enters a pub alone, one of the locals is obliged to strike up a conversation within 10 seconds. I tested this on three occasions this week, and it worked every time.

Soak up the stout with a helping of dulse – dried, salted seaweed which some locals believe deserves to be as ubiquitous as potato crisps. When you track some down by following one of the signs beside the A2 advertising "Dulse, 100 yards", you find out why it isn't: the taste resembles spinach-flavoured Sellotape.

Cushendall represents the end of the easy ride along the coast; no highway could be cut in the cliffs north of here. Prettier and more concise than other towns on the coast, Cushendall is the best base for exploring the Nine Glens of Antrim that carve up the nearby countryside. Each valley has been chiselled out of the ancient rock by a river; some are fearsomely steep, but the A2 follows the path of least resistance along broad Glencorp. At Cushendun, you could continue gently along the inland route. Be tempted, though, by the signposted "Scenic route via Torr Head", which lives up to its promise.

In a series of switchbacks, the road claws along the coast, reaching 650ft at Green Hill (a fellow cyclist I met had amended his map to replace the understated word "Hill" with something much more graphic). Apart from the odd wheezing cyclist, you feel quite cut off from the

rest of the world. The only visible company is the dark, brooding shape of the Mull of Kintyre, 13 miles away across the North Channel. You start humming the tune, and by the following day are still doing so (and cursing Sir Paul McCartney for his anthem to the Scottish peninsula).

Ballycastle, where normal life resumes, is a bit of a boom town this summer. The old ferry link to Campbeltown, abandoned around the time Paul McCartney had a Christmas No 1 with his dirge, has been reactivated. Never mind that the vessel that the Argyll & Antrim Steam Packet Co is using, *MV Claymore*, has enjoyed many better days; the route opens up all sorts of possibilities for travellers wanting to make a circuit of Scotland and Northern Ireland.

The town remains endearingly unaffected by the attention; the garden of the house three doors along from my hostel featured an old bidet in place of a plant pot.

Most of the new arrivals turn right out of the harbour, and start climbing the cliffs to the west. Five miles out, at the apex of a hairpin bend, a sign points towards Carrick-a-Rede, which translates from the Gaelic as

The island degenerates into the sea after a couple of hundred yards along the footpath, but from it you can survey its stout sibling, Sheep Island, and gasp at the scale of the shoreline (or is that in trepidation at the prospect of the return journey?).

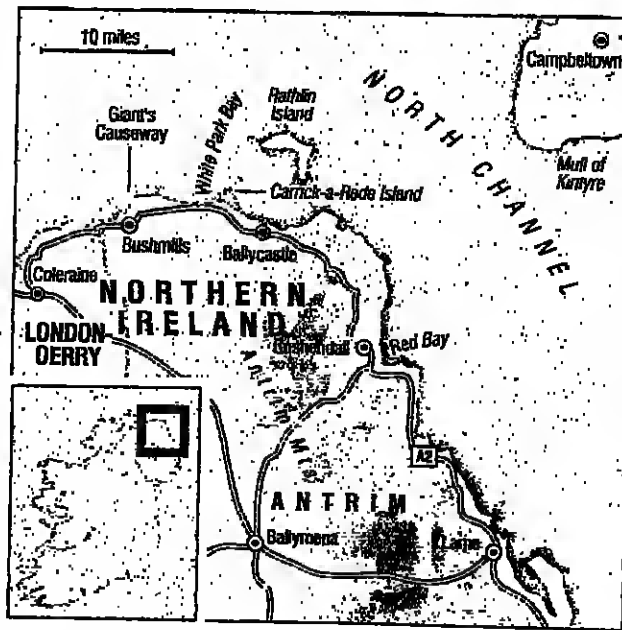
Assuming you make it, continue along to another National Trust treasure: White Park Bay. Were you to design the perfect beach from scratch, it would look a lot like this: a mile-long arc of blanch sand, sheltered between two mighty headlands. What makes White Park Bay special is what's absent: no buildings beyond a couple of handsome houses, and no people – presumably because this is Antrim, not Antigua.

No other island can boast Antrim's final phenomenon: the Giant's Causeway. As bees will testify, nature adores a hexagon. For geological and geometric proof, take the trail down from the coast road to a sight for which, like all real wonders, no photograph can prepare you. An ancient volcanic eruption somehow crystallised into a chorus of hexagonal columns, each a subtly different height. They tessellate together to form a broad promenade into the sea. You find yourself drawn to the coda, shiny with spray, and turn to face the exquisite detail of the causeway against a magnificently barren backdrop. At dusk, you find yourself alone, yet again.

To go from this to surveying number plates might sound eccentric. But I wanted to find out whence the few visitors that there were had come. So for the hour's cycle ride home, I counted. German tourists were tops, followed by French and Dutch. Not one vehicle, though, from Eogland, Wales or Scotland.

One reason for three-quarters of the United Kingdom perceiving a spectacular coast was summed up on the road sign announcing, truthfully: "Antrim's Coast – an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty". Someone had spray-painted the initials of the Ulster Volunteer Force over the sign, and an accomplice had plastered "Victory at Drumcree" in large blue capitals across the width of the road. But not once this week did the coastline feel like a front line.

Simon Calder paid £27 to sail from Cairnryan to Larne aboard P&O's *Jettliner* (01234 572615). He returned from Ballycastle to Campbeltown on the Argyll & Antrim Steam Packet, the *Claymore*, fare £23 (0345 523523). He stayed at Kathleen Quinn's bed and breakfast at Sharnore in Cushendall (012667 71610) for £15 a night, and paid £6 a night for a bed at the Castle Hostel by the harbour in Ballycastle (012657 62337). More information: Northern Ireland Tourist Board, St Anne's Court, 59 North Street, Belfast BT1 1NB (01232 231221). No map is necessary for the stretch between Larne and Cushendall (just stick to the A2), but beyond that, sheet five of the Ordnance Survey of Northern Ireland 1:50,000 series is recommended.



"road in the rock". Follow the signs to see why: the rock juts out into the sea like a bulky semi-colon, separated from the shore by a narrow channel (the "road") hewn through sheer cliffs.

The average visitor comes here for a cheap thrill. The channel is crossed by a terrifying rope walkway, agitated by even a benevolent breeze. Two at a time, tourists teeter across the 20 yard divide. Those with unkind travelling companions are instructed to pause halfway across to pose for the camera. Dogs, a sign helpfully warns, are banned – any hound would certainly tumble through the worryingly open spaces between the ropes and the plank, along which a petrified Japanese girl is stumbling. Seabirds circle and heckle, while waves emphasise the rocks 200 feet below by repeatedly smashing against them.

The great thing about Carrick-a-Rede is that you are drawn here for the crack, but stumble across a splendid vista of seascape.

President Clinton doesn't want you to go on holiday. OK: that's an exaggeration. What the world's most powerful man wants to stop you doing is going on holiday to Cuba. There are two main reasons why you might decide to book a trip to Cuba. The first is the opportunity to visit the last sensible bastion of socialism, a nation that has survived for nearly 40 years under the guidance (or should that be "thumb") of Fidel Castro, the world's longest-serving political leader. The second is that the Caribbean's largest island has some splendid beaches and decent rum, and happens to be stupidly cheap at the moment. But whichever reason applies, Mr Clinton has placed all sorts of obstacles between you and Havana.

Britain's travellers are caught up in the economic war being waged by the United States against what it says is an oppressive and undemocratic regime. There are, of course, many oppressive and undemocratic regimes in the world, but the only one that Washington makes a fuss about is visiting Cuba. You might imagine that the British should be able to travel without outside interference. But the tentacles of Mr Clinton's economic embargo extend so deep that Britain's biggest tour operator, Thomson, has withdrawn its holidays in Cuba for fear that its directors would be denied permission to travel to the US (one of the consequences of "trading with the enemy"). Plenty of other tour operators continue to offer holidays in

Cuba, but a leading chain of British travel agencies is set to stop selling them. The imminent takeover by the US company Carlson of the tour operator Inspirations will mean that all branches of the travel agent AT Mays become American-owned. As soon as the deal goes through, AT Mays will stop selling Cuba. Independent agents and operators will continue to risk the wrath of the White House by selling holidays in Cuba, and independent-minded travellers will continue to buy them. Should you book a seat from Gatwick to Havana on the Cuban national airline, you will find the aircraft used will be a DC-10 – manufactured in Long Beach, California. Mr Clinton's embargo must be alarmingly leaky if it allows a plane that size through the net.



Simon Calder

"Discussing the black market with clients was a no-win situation, rather like discussing sex with teenagers"

"Your piece on black markets in Eastern Europe brought back many memories," writes Neil Taylor from Bristol. Mr Taylor is managing director of Regent Holidays, which has been offering holidays to odd places for three decades – many of which, until recently, offered the sorts of advantageous parallel markets mentioned in this column last week. I miss the thrills and opportunity of the black market; Mr Taylor doesn't. "Discussing the black market with clients was a no-win situation, rather like discussing sex with teenagers: if you ignored the subject altogether, sudden unprepared exposure could lead to disastrous consequences; if you raised it, perhaps the temptation to experiment was equally fraught."

"I read the story over a beer and sandwich in Frenzlauberberg, a Bohemian quarter in former East Berlin – where, in the mid-Eighties, black-market books and tapes were just as important as Western currency. I can't say I miss the black market, now that prices in Berlin have fallen, and good exchange rates are equally available from cashpoints."

exchange bureaux and hanks. And, of course, Sterling is strong all over the former communist world. Given American sensitivities, I shall not name the individual who suggested that the best black-market anywhere involves smuggling Havana cigars into the US, where aficionados will pay a fortune for the real thing.

WORLD COVER

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Around Africa
Kenya: "The Department of State recommends that American citizens avoid travel to the coastal province of Kenya, including the city of Mombasa and its suburbs. On August 13, a group apparently bent on exploiting ethnic tensions attacked a police station near Mombasa and seized weapons. On August 16 and 17, sporadic mob violence was reported on Mombasa's north and south coasts. Residents and visitors in the Mombasa area are urged to take the highest security precautions." — *US State Department Travel Advisory*.

“Failure to observe the following points of Keeyan etiquette can get you arrested or put you in a position where you may be obliged to pay a bribe. Stand, in cinemas and on other occasions when the national anthem is playing. Stand still when the national flag is being raised or lowered in your field of view. Never tear up a banknote of any denomination. And don't urinate in public” – *Rough Guide to Kenya*.

Ethiopia: There have been a number of indiscriminate bomb and grenade attacks in public places, including restaurants and hotels in Addis Ababa, Dira Dawa and Harar in recent months. Avoid travel to the Somali region, Southern Bale and south eastern areas – *Foreign Office travel advice unit. Call 0171-238 4503 for more information.*

Hundreds of readers entered our competition to win a week's holiday in Brazil and Rio de Janeiro. The prize, offered by the Latin American travel experts Journey Latin America and the airline company Transbrasil, includes a stay in the north-eastern city of Salvador, then on to Rio.

The answers: the national football stadium is the Maracana; Christ the Redeemer is on the Corcovado; the dance is the samba.

And the winner is: Diane Greenwood, whose tie-break entry was: "If I were to win this competition I'd fly to Rio with ... everything I possess."

Since independence, Zimbabwe has boomed as a clean, green example of beneficial tourism, says Simon Calder

Few eyes are brighter, few smiles broader, few minds sharper than those belonging to the dozens of Zimbabwean children who sweep every visitor along to their school in a tidal wave of jollity. The openness, generosity and sheer good humour of life in an African village such as Mahenye should persuade you to postpone your departure from it as long as you can. But when you finally retreat to your safari lodge, you can sleep soundly knowing that the proceeds from one snore in every 10 are destined for the local community.

When the new country first began to promote itself in the early Eighties, the slogan used was "Welcome to Zimbabwe – now in its 150 millionth year". No matter that the name of the nation had existed for barely 12 months; Zimbabwe set out to equate itself with nature. The ads implied that the tourist, besides being privileged to share in an ancient, unspoilt land, was doing the place a favour. The now much-copied concept of eco-tourism was born.

Since then, a lead-free, politically correct, environmentally sensitive travel bandwagon has been rolling across the world. Travel companies realise that the image of caring about the effect of tourism can pay off, for their shareholders as well as for us stakeholders in the future of

the planet. But when any big corporation begins to brag about its green credentials, I tend to urge a good helping of scepticism.

So when a large hotel enterprise like Zimbabwe Sun begins to develop a region close to the Mozambique frontier, you have to ask a lot of questions about the likely winners and losers. But, having been a tourist there myself, and having talked to everyone, from the chambermaid to the leaders of the community, the project seems to represent an excellent example of how sustainable tourism development can work – and an exciting model for any community thinking of starting along the road towards reaping the uncertain rewards of tourism.

For the past 30 years, the area around the Save (pronounced sah-vay) river has been out of bounds to foreigners. Initially the reason was insurrection within white-ruled Rhodesia; then, after the country became Zimbabwe, the war in Mozambique required tourists to be kept away. As a result, when the conflict ended, the region was left with a cleaner sheet, as far as travellers are concerned, than almost anywhere else outside obscure regions of the former USSR.

Compared with most of the ex-Soviet Union, the great advantage that south-eastern Zimbabwe possesses is extraordinary natural beauty.

Nothing dramatic, mind: the landscape gives the impression of having been there for ever, gradually and comfortably worn down by the millennia. From the mud that has slumped in the Lowveld, slender trees accelerate above the gentle scrub towards a sky whose intense blue shrieks at the onlooker.

For a room at the Mahenye lodge, you pay a surprisingly modest \$50 per night. The local community claims 10 per cent of this, with a guaranteed minimum of 250,000 Zimbabwe dollars (£13,300). After 10 years, community leaders can elect to close down the operation or lease it to someone else.

To gauge how much the scheme is working, just visit the local school and meet Lyson Masango. He will explain how, in 10 years, the school's roll has increased from 50 to 700. Knowing that one-tenth of your spending is contributing to the education of the village can tempt you to over-indulgence; one more Castle beer could help buy another schoolbook. That kind of logic could be dangerous.

Mr Masango is also chairman of the local wildlife committee. What, you may ask, about the wildlife? Are they destined to become 'objects of voyeurism in the manner of animals elsewhere' in Africa, barely distinguishable from beasts confined to zoos?

Not if the walking safari I joined was anything to go by. We spent four hours looking not at impala and elephants, but at their dung. The guide demonstrates, in an impressively inspirational manner, how animal excreta can tell you much about the ecology of the wilderness.

The point of walking wasn't just to get closer to nature (in all its glories). I wanted to tread lightly on this miraculous country, which has never known the tyre tracks of the ecotourism bandwagon. By the end, I realised that nothing is bigger than an African sky, nothing is noisier than an African silence, and nothing is more fragile than the balance between land, wildlife and man.

Simon Calder travelled to Zimbabwe for BBC-2's 'The Travel Show'. Air Zimbabwe (0171-491 0009) and British Airways (0345 222111) fly between London Gatwick and Harare. Official fares are high - a minimum of £725 return on Air Zimbabwe. But if you can travel on September 9 or 29, and return before the end of November, you pay only £425. This ticket is on sale from next Tuesday. To reach Mahenye from Harare involves a drive of around six hours; you can travel on a series of buses, but this is likely to be a long process. The Mahenye Safari Lodge can be contacted on 00 263 31 3159.

Simon Calder and friends – whose education is largely funded through the clever exploitation of tourists
PHOTOGRAPH BY RAY MARLOW

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Safari in the land of sand

Namibia is exotic but accessible, as Scarlett MccGwire discovered

“ Oh, this is better than *Wildlife on One*,” enthused seven-year-old Misha, as she spotted an elephant. We had been in Namibia’s celebrated Etosha Park a mere 15 minutes and already zebra had casually crossed the road in front of us and we’d seen giraffes munching the tops of roadside bushes. Herds of springbok nibbled at the grass, friskily nervous. The five of us sat in the car, staring at real, wild African animals for the first time in our lives.

We had organised the trip on our own from London – saving ourselves money and allowing for much wider choice than is offered by a package – and we had been surprised at how easy it had been. The efficient Namibia Tourist Information had sent us an envelope containing a list of registered accommodation (government and private), brochures, a map, and details of car hire companies. With the aid of a guidebook, we had decided where we wanted to go, and bookings had been made by phone or fax. Every reservation was kept.

The car hire company advised us against a four-wheel drive for our itinerary, as the roads were so good. So we saved ourselves £20 a day, but our rented car still cost nearly £50 a day. They also gave us valuable advice on how not to flip a car, a tourist speciality: drive on dust roads at 80kph with two hands always on the wheel. In Namibia, which is five times the size of Britain and has only 1.6 million people, meeting one car every 10km is par for the course.

After arranging the flight, my first call was to book a "luxury" bungalow at Okakuejo camp in Etosha, near the waterhole. (The adjective reflects neither the standard nor the price.) These need to be reserved some months in advance; the alternative is a more expensive hotel outside the park. Etosha is open only from sunrise to sunset, so those staying outside cannot enjoy an evening at the waterhole.

watching the animals leisurely come and go. It is the surest chance of seeing the rare black rhino; a pair came down both nights that we were there.

We stayed two nights at Okakuejo, and two at the eastern camp, Namutoni. During the day we went on DIY game drives. We bought a map of Etosha which had seven pages of pictures of birds and animals, and we drove around, able to identify what we saw: such as kudu antelope, and warthog families, which run around in the long grass with their tails up like flags so that they can see each other.

Our summer is their winter and dry season, so the animals were easy to see as they congregated around or journeyed to the waterholes, all of which were marked on the map. The days were T-shirt and shorts weather, but the nights and early mornings were cold.

After Etosha we had booked two guest lodges: the tiny, remote Kaross Lodge, where Tammy and Uwe Hoth were happy to answer all our questions – from race and politics, to the habits and habitats of the animals – and Mount Etjo, more the size of an English country hotel, which had brought animals such as elephants and rhinos on to the farm for the tourists and, rather more dubiously, a large pen of lions, which were fed every night.

We had decided to stay three nights in each place, so the children would not find the driving too grueling, particularly as every guest lodge has its own daily activities. At Mount Eljo the extra day meant we were able to arrange horse-riding. While at Kaross, which is at the western end of Etosha, we went into the closed part of the park with Uwe as a guide and learnt far more about the animals we saw than we could have done from any book.

The food was astonishing in both quality and quantity, at both places. Twelve-year-old Pascoe and his father liked to admire the impala and oryx during the day and savour them in the evening, to Misha's horror: 17-year-old Molly and I found the selection of vegetable dishes quite wide enough to fill us up. A fresh

home-baked cake every afternoon made us feel completely spoiled.

Staying at Kaross, visitors are made to feel like guests, and all meals are taken together. The Hoths have started a foundation, Afri-leo, to save lions, which often escape from Etosha and are shot by farmers. Their first rescue was to buy five of the animals, including three cubs, which had been kept in dreadful conditions in a zoo, and at least give them some space; they can never be reintroduced to the wild. Meeting and learning about the lions was part of our stay.

We then made for the coast, taking in the colony of 80,000 seals on our way to the cold, clammy seaside resort of Swakopmund. You can choose from camel riding in the desert, viewing the flamingo colony in nearby Walvis Bay, or dune buggy riding.

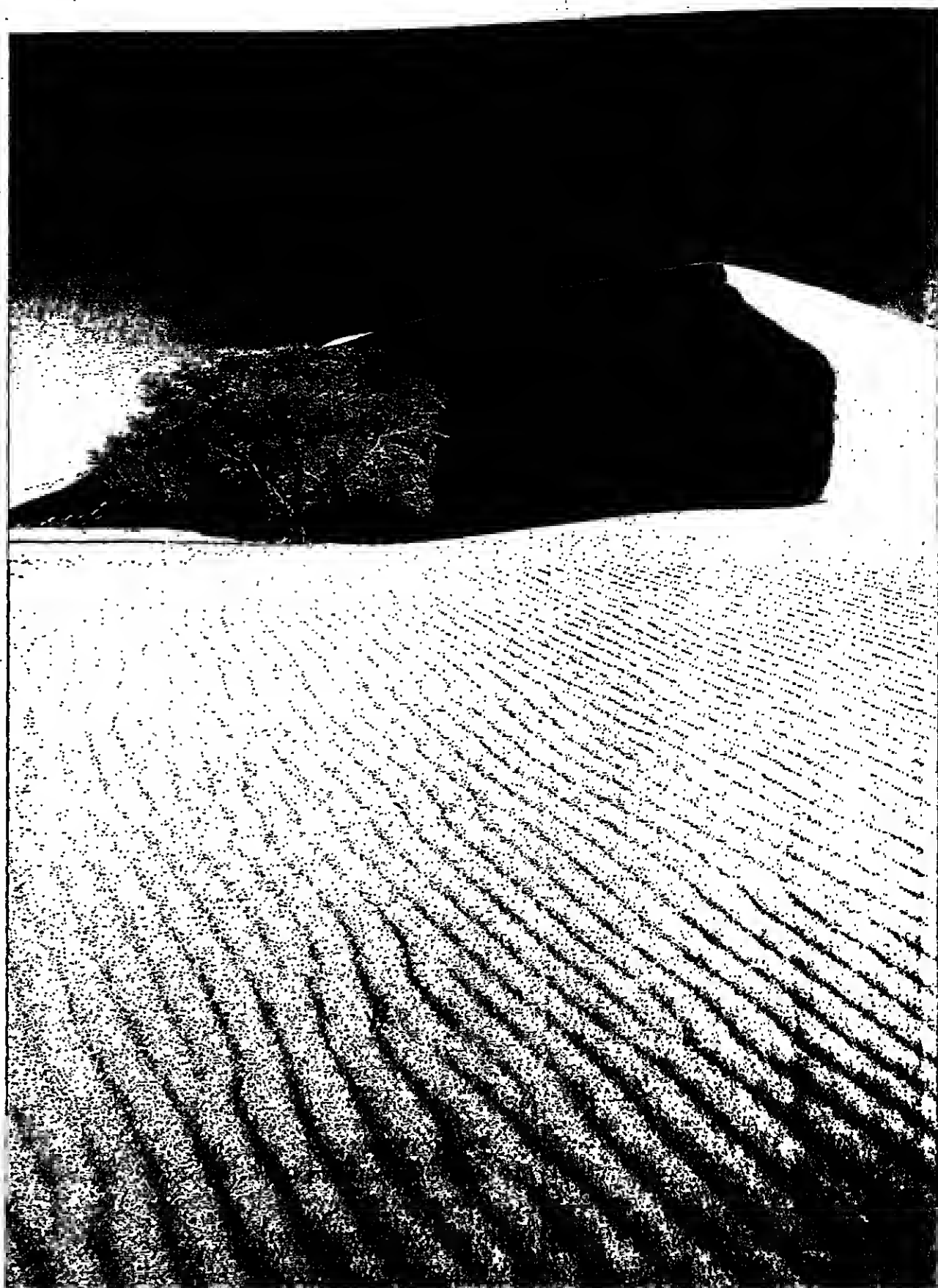
Our last stop was Namibia's most famous landmark, the pink Sossusvlei dunes, at 300 metres reputed to be the highest in the world. It took a pre-dawn start to be at the park gates at sunrise, then a 65-km drive, followed by a 5-km walk for those without four-wheel drive.

Fically we stood on the crest of Sos-sus-tvei, looking at the parabolas made by the surrounding dunes merging in red, pink and orange, and then we laouched ourselves off to race down the side. It was one of those rare moments of total exhilaration for us all.

The only airline with direct flights from the UK to Namibia is Air Namibia (0181-944 6181). Until the end of October, the airline is charging £445 return (including tax) from Heathrow to the capital, Windhoek, but after that the fare increases to £693.

Lower fares may be available from discount agents on airlines such as Lufthansa and South African Airways, via Frankfurt and Johannesburg respectively.

Namibia Tourist Information: 5 Chandos Street, London W1 (0171-636 2924). **Davitt Books for Travellers** (0171-224 2295) recommends the 'Namibia Handbook' (Footprint, £9.99).



Just deserts: Namibia's sand dunes dwarf even those of the mighty Sahara

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Blenheim Palace - a fantastic display of 18th-century intellect, wit and pleasure
PHOTOGRAPH: JOHN LAWRENCE

DAYS OUT

Monumental, it may be, but Blenheim Palace is a paradise for children too, writes Catherine Stebbings



Marlborough country

Blenheim Palace, the seat of the Duke of Marlborough, is one of England's most imposing stately homes. The massive house was built by a grateful nation for John Churchill, who became a national hero and the 1st Duke after his defeat of the French at Blenheim, in Bavaria, in 1704.

It was also the birthplace of Winston Churchill - and although he never lived here he is buried in Bladon, on the edge of the estate.

The vast classical palace, with its sprawling symmetry, majestic colonnades and imposing Corinthian portico, is typical of the work of the architect and playwright, Sir John Vanbrugh. Blenheim is a fantastic display of 18th-century intellect, wit and pleasure.

The monumental mansion exudes grandeur, opulence and power, but its sheer size makes it uninhabitable.

Inside, Blenheim has it all: architectural details include work by Hawksmoor and Grinling Gibbons, murals and ceilings painted by Laguerre. Paintings include works by Rubens, Van Dyck and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and there are vast cabinets of Meissen and Sèvres, and sculptures by Ryshrak, Epstein and Coysevox.

Outside, a number of formal gardens with fountains, ponds and neatly clipped hedges elegantly separate the house from "Capability" Brown's landscaped park.

An arboretum, including a rose garden, hides many rare and interesting species.

The former kitchen garden, now known as the Pleasure

Gardens, offers many activities, particularly for younger visitors, including a butterfly house. The main attraction of this part of the palace complex, however, is the world's largest hedge maze, representing the history of the palace, known as the Marlborough Maze. Opened in 1991, it is now mature enough to puzzle even the most wily of visitors.

In the same area is a model of a local street, as well as putting greens, giant chess and draughts, and lots more for children wanting to let off steam.

The visitors Keith Jenkins, social work team manager, and his wife Sara, teacher, took their daughter Hannah and her friend Imogen, both seven years old.

Sara: The house has an idyllic setting, with its immense park and large lake, and smaller formal gardens around the house. Although we shared the day with thousands of others it was not claustrophobic; there was just a wonderful feeling of space. Everything is beautifully kept and well organised. No litter, no mess, no

queues and plenty of refreshment stops.

The children couldn't follow the guided tour in the house, partly because they were swamped by a large group of adults so they were unable to see or hear. So I took them off and we made our own way, dodging between groups, and the children enjoyed looking at the tapestries, furniture and paintings at their own pace. We must have been inside for at least an hour.

Keith: The tours around the palace were well organised and kept moving despite the large number of people. I enjoyed the tour very much; it was both entertaining and historically interesting. The guides took us from one room to the next giving a brief story of the palace, the Churchills and the family, looking at a few objects along the way. It was fascinating. I thought the library was particularly impressive.

Essentially you come here to see the palace, but there is lots more, which makes it a good family day. It didn't feel over-hyped like stately homes which are dependent on theme parks. Blenheim had a pleasant, unsophisticated, old-

fashioned touch to it. It was a great way to combine education with a little bit of leisure.

Hannah: I really enjoyed the pleasure gardens where there was lots to do and see. I loved the maze, which was quite big and very difficult. I got lost a lot even though the hedges aren't that high. We also saw lots of pretty butterflies and plants in the butterfly house, and then we took the mini-train back to the house.

I loved going around the lake in the little boat. We saw masses of swans, a heron and a little grebe. It was a really good way to see the park, but we didn't go under the big bridge.

The house was interesting, too. In the room where Winston Churchill was born I saw a frame with his curls in it.

I liked the blue-and-white china and the huge tapestries on the wall - they were as big as a carpet and had really tiny stitches. We saw lots of clocks, furniture and statues - loads of things like that.

Imogen: I really enjoyed the park and the gardens - even though we were attacked

by wasps on our picnic. The maze was great and they had lots to play on, like monkey bars, putting and giant chess.

But the adventure playground wasn't so good, because it was stuck behind a high wall.

I thought the house was quite interesting but there was so much gold everywhere that it was completely over the top. In the library there was a statue of Queen Anne made of marble, but it had so much carving on it that it looked like marzipan.

The deal Blenheim Palace (01993 811091), Woodstock, Oxfordshire, is 10 miles north of Oxford on the A44 and is well signposted. Parking is free in the park close to the palace entrance.

Opening hours: Blenheim Palace is open daily, 10.30am-5.30pm, last admission 4.45pm, from mid-March to the end of October. The park is open daily, 9am-5pm. Dogs are not allowed into the palace or the palace gardens, but may go on a lead in the park.

Admission: palace and park: adults £7.80, OAPs £5.80, children aged 5-15 £3.80. Family ticket (two adults, two children) £20. This includes the tour around the

house, the Churchill exhibition, boat ride, train rides and entrance to the herb garden, butterfly house as well as an adventure play-ground. Park only: adults £3, children aged five to 15, £1.50. Extras: Guided tours around private apartments from noon until 4pm: adults £3.40, children £1.70. Walled garden, which includes maze and children's games, £1. Bowney castle, 50p. Brochure, £3.50.

Access: on foot on level ground, with lots of ramps for buggies and wheelchairs and a small train to take visitors from the house to the pleasure gardens.

Food: plenty of refreshment stops for drinks and ice-cream. Interesting lunches are served in the elegant Indian Room restaurant overlooking the water terraces: three courses £14.50, two courses £12.95. Lighter meals are offered at the adjoining cafeteria: baguettes £2.80, veggie special £2.90. There is also a cafe in the pleasure gardens for light meals and snacks. Picnicking is popular and there is plenty of space.

Shops: there are a good number of shops selling books, gifts and sweets. Souvenirs range from Blenheim fudge to golf balls carrying the Blenheim logo.

Toilets: clean, efficient and numerous.

FOR THE VERY YOUNG Pevensey Castle, Eastbourne (01323 762604) hosts a teddy bears' picnic. Families with small children invited to bring along both Mr Ted and a picnic on Sunday and Monday between noon and 5pm to join in the festivities. Punch and Judy are planning to put in an appearance and for the more artistically adventurous tot there will be face painting. Adults £3, concessions £2.25 and children (under 15) £1.50.

Hall Hill Farms, County Durham (01388 730300), also plays host to the stuffed ones - more teddy bears abound. Other attractions include a children's entertainer and treasure hunt. Children will be able to get to know the animals on the interactive working farm. On both Sunday 24 and Monday 25, a family ticket for two adults and two children will cost £8.

The Lead Mining Museum, Sarnagar (01299 250416) is also dining alfresco with the grizzles. Patrick the Clown will entertain and the children will have the opportunity to learn circus skills. Entry is free, but does not include entry to the museum.

Friends of Thomas the Tank Engine, The Embay and Bolton Abbey Steam Railway (01756 794727) will be letting off steam from

Are we nearly there

Bank holiday days out

Saturday though to Monday. Thomas and Percy will be there and the last train leaves at 4pm. Admission is £5.50 per person and children get a present from the Fat Controller as a memento of the day.

Farleigh Hungerford Castle, Wales (01225 754026) follows the medieval theme with juggling, jesters and jousting games, specifically designed to be safe for children. At £2.50 for adults and £1.25 for children, this is well worth a look in on Sunday and Monday (10am-6pm).

ALL DRESSED UP Warwick Castle, Warwick (01926 406600). This weekend the castle entertains the "Knights Errant". A medieval tale is told throughout the castle over the holiday period. At 1pm and 3.45pm the Magic

perform to enchant young minds. Around the castle, various period characters appear - strolling minstrels and medieval craftsmen. Open 10am-6pm. Adults £9.95, children £5.95, family ticket £27 (two adults and two children).

Dover Castle and Second World War Tunnels, Dover (01304 201628) hosts the Lion Rampant for their medieval weekend. Here a re-enactment group is accompanied by music, drama, pageantry and dancing. Open 10am-6pm. Adults £6, concessions £4.50 and children (under 16) £3.

The North of England Balloon Show, Ripley Castle, North Yorkshire (01423 770152) takes place this weekend. On Sunday and Monday there will be a re-enactment of the siege of the castle followed at 6pm by the balloon ascent. Every night there will be a laser

and light show over the lake with glowing tethered balloons and fireworks to finish. Adults £6, children £4 for one evening performance and one day time entry.

FOR A PIECE OF THE ACTION Ultimate Fast Car '97, Santa Pod Raceway, Bedfordshire (01453 418798). This will appeal to the older more frenetic child. Run in conjunction with Fast Car Magazine, car drivers battle to prove they are niftier shifters. Lads are encouraged to behave badly with The Sound Challenge Association - you try to make the loudest sound with your in-car stereo. (And if your children aren't deafened by this, you may at least hope that they will never wish to jack up the volume again.) Adults £15 for the three day weekend, children £8.

Cadwell Park Circuit, Lincolnshire (01507 343248) hosts MCN British Super Bike Championships. Practice and qualifiers are over the weekend (free entry for children) and the races are on Monday. The Ulster Grand Prix (01846 648460) on Saturday is the place to see international motorcycleists. Entry to the circuit is £7 for adults, but is free for children.

Michelle Owens

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Wind resistant: the garden at Dunbeath Castle is a haven carved out of a hostile world

PHOTOGRAPH BY JOHN PAUL PHOTOGRAPHY

Enclosure was the defining feature of the first gardens. It provided safety from wild beasts, marauding neighbours and encroaching wilderness, and protection from the elements. The garden was a small piece of paradise carved out of a hostile world. For a 20th-century take on that medieval battle between order and chaos, go to Dunbeath on the east coast of Scotland, beyond Inverness.

Dunbeath Castle is built on a steep, narrow promontory of rock, surrounded on three sides by the sea. In terms of military defence, the situation is ideal, but by any other measure this is as inhospitable a place as Wales on Sunday. So the visual shock, when you open the door into Dunbeath's secret, walled garden is all the greater: roses, delphiniums, snapdragons, honeysuckle, brilliant annuals, fuchsias and agapanthus pack pell-mell into the short growing season which is all the time the terrain allows.

Dunbeath's gardener, James Campbell, has worked here for 20 years. Didn't he ever get frustrated by frosts in late May and early September, sea fogs, gales from the north-east and from the south-west, all of which are standard fare at Dunbeath? "I was born here," he said, simply. He has never known any other way of gardening. "I like the atmosphere of the place. I'm not a hustler and bustle person."

The weather, he concedes, can be "very brutal" and this year has not been an easy one. There has been very little sun and the annuals he set out have been sulking because of it. His Livingstone daisies gave up the ghost altogether. However, the double herbaceous borders that run down the centre of the garden are flourishing, with wonderful swathes of agapanthus edging the central roundel.

The garden is divided into eight plots, four either side of the great double borders. It's still a productive garden, as it was meant to be when the walls were first thrown up some time around 1800. There are cabbages, peas, onions, potatoes, masses of soft fruit, all edged with annuals. Goats are a Moroccan broom, *Cytisus batandieri*, which is carefully tied in against the wall. Like the one-time soldiers on the ramparts of the castle nearby, it has learnt how foolhardy it is to stick your head above the wall.

The garden slopes gently down to the sea, which is mercifully out of view, until you climb up one of the sets of stone steps which lead to bastion look-outs in the corners of the walls. At the top of the slope is a long range of glasshouses with peaches and figs trained against the back wall. "Always the first job after Christmas," said Mr Campbell. "Untie the fig. Lay down its branches. Scrub and whitewash the wall. Then tie it all up again." If I were him, I'd be spinning out the inside jokes until well into April.

They say in Caithness that the best growing only comes after the turn of the year. After



An harbour in a storm

Gardening: Anna Pavord finds a blaze of blooms in the gloom of Scotland

the longest day, the plants go like the clappers before they are cut down by the first frost. At Candacraig in Aberdeenshire, in the quiet, unvisited valley of the Don, the growing season is slightly longer, and Liz Young, who bought the garden 12 years ago, says that June is perhaps her favourite month, with Asiatic primulas flowering fit to burst and huge swathes of sky blue meconopsis filling the beds. She even succeeds with the rare, red-flowered *Meconopsis punicea*, which caused such a sensation at Chelsea when it was shown on the Alpine Garden Society's stand.

Candacraig is a walled garden, too, built about 1820. It belonged to the big house next door until, in the Eighties, the estate had to be split up. Liz Young and her husband, Harry, with no previous professional experience of gardening, decided "on impulse" to buy the walled garden, which would otherwise have been covered with new houses.

Harry Young, by his own admission, is not a gardener. He looks after the paths. Liz does everything else. I dared not think how many hours she worked in a day. "Oh, I'm quite stubborn," she says. She must also have a cast-iron back. The place is richly



romantic, spilling with great mounds of geranium, globe thistle, shaggy-petalled lily, with special beds for meconopsis and primulas set behind the great formal double borders that sweep through both levels of the garden. It's an eloquent tribute to the virtues of stubbornness. The garden at Bol-

fracks, near Aberfeldy in Perthshire, overlooks the Tay, a much more familiar river to most tourists than the Don. Tourism in Scotland is built around neat packages: the whisky trail, the castle trail, Speyside, Deeside, Byside (though no Donside). How long before we are offered the Safeway trail? Their supermarkets featured prominently on the outskirts of many towns I went to last week. Meanwhile, high streets staggered on the wrong side of visibility, blind windows boarded up behind decaying, though

handsome, façades. Bolfracks tells you immediately that it is a much-loved garden, impervious, quite rightly, to fashion. It has a quiet peace and self confidence, with the planting still singing of the Fifties: cherries, acers, berberis, rhododendrons. It is beautifully gardened, though

mildew was playing sad havoc with the phlox in the borders.

The lawns, sheltering inside compartments made by old shrub roses, were diagonally cross-mown, which, given the slope they are on, is not a job to take on lightly. At the top of a path that winds upwards alongside a small stream is a twig-house, where I could happily have spent the rest of the week looking at the clouds sailing over the Grampians.

If you are planning a trip to Scotland, forget the brown-signalled tourist trails. Buy a copy of *Gardens of Scotland* (£2.50), published by Scotland's Gardens Scheme, and take your self-off-piste.

The garden at Dunbeath Castle, Dunbeath, Caithness is open tomorrow (2-6pm) Admission £1.50. Candacraig gardens and nursery on the A94 at Strathdon, Aberdeenshire, are open daily until the end of September (10am to 5pm). Bolfracks, Perthshire is open daily (10am-6pm) until the end of October. Admission £2.

Weekend work

Pinch out the growing tips of tomato plants to encourage them to concentrate on ripening their existing fruit. Continue to feed plants in tubs and hanging baskets, but do not feed shrubs or herbaceous perennials at this stage. New growth made now will not survive autumn frosts.

Prune rambler roses and climbing roses that have only one flush of flower, such as 'Albertine' and 'Easlea's Golden Rambler'. Match the amount of wood that you cut out with the amount of new growth that the rose has made this year. Encourage new growth to sprout from the base by taking out some of the old wood entirely. Tie in new growths of dahlias and chrysanthemums. Debut dahlias regularly for the best display. Trim hedges of box, beech, yew, holly, laurel, privet and Leyland cypress. On second thoughts, grub out the Leyland cypress.

Thin out old shoots of shrubs such as philadelphus if necessary, and slash back overgrown honeysuckle. Low-growing hebes can also be thinned. Cut down canes of raspberries that have fruited, and tie in new ones. Cut down the old foliage of strawberry plants, and dispose of the straw on the compost heap.

Take cuttings of indoor plants such as coleus, tradescantia, zebra and busy lizzies. Take 3in to 4in cuttings from the tips of busy lizzies and push them into a pot of sandy compost. When they have rooted well and are growing away, pinch out the tops of the cuttings to encourage bushy growth. Take 5in cuttings of coleus, choosing the non-flowering shoots to put up singly in John Innes No 1 compost.

This is the time when you should carry secateurs every time you go into the garden. Roses need endless dead-heading and you also need to remove branches of plain green leaves on variegated shrubs. If you don't, the green will eventually overtake the variegated growth.

Plant autumn flowering bulbs. While you are about it, mark the position of lily bulbs, the growth of which is beginning to die back. This may stop you accidentally digging them up in the great autumn clear-up.

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Wannabee artists and buzzy beards

So you thought bees just made honey and pollinated flowers? They can also be pretty creative, writes Patricia Cleveland-Peck



Wax lyrical: Aganetha Dyck's bee art at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. From the top: women's shoes; birdbath; wax tablets

PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY HARDMAN JONES



Bees inspire eccentricity. Certainly the Canadian artist Aganetha Dyck is crazy about them. She has spent the summer "collaborating" with more than 500,000 bees in a most unusual project, the results of which are now on show at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park. Basically she places domestic objects such as shoes and teapots (even, at one stage, a park bench) within beehives and waits for the bees to coat them with honeycomb and wax. She then removes these objects and works on them, transforming them into shadowy, strangely disturbing artworks.

Her artistic career began in the early Eighties, when her early shows displayed everyday objects transformed into works of art by some form of domestic reprocessing - shrunken sweaters and bottled, fried and canned hushers, for example.

On a visit to the local Manitoba Bee Works in July she saw a text on the wall: "Bee Made Honey" - an obvious enough statement, except that the sign itself appeared to have been carved from honeycomb. When she learnt that it had been created by the bees themselves - on a mould placed in the hive - she realised the inherent possibilities of working "in collaboration" with bees. Last year she produced her most ambitious installation, *The Extended Wedding Party*, which is currently touring Holland. This consists of gowns, shoes, coats and a glass wedding dress which have been transformed by bees into unsettling images of change and decay.

In Yorkshire she worked for two months with local beekeepers to produce items that she feels signify the park itself. "I thought about what the Yorkshire Sculpture Park is about," she said. "It is natural, but at the same time man-made. Rather like the bees: they're in the hive, not their natural place. Then I thought of the people who visit the park and what they sometimes leave behind: things like shoes. Then I thought of what they do, which is to sit on the park benches, and British people drink tea, so I thought of the teapot ... I'm trying to connect, because bees connect world-wide."

"I regard the bees not as individuals but as a thought process, almost a computer software program," she continued. "And working with them fits in with the chances I take and the accidents I look for in my work. They are a force I totally respect. I love their warmth and docility, and the fact that they have such an old form of construction - and not being a perfect builder myself I find their construction totally perfect."

In fact, although Aganetha usually takes the coated object out of the hive and works on it further, adding wax or taking some away, there are times when she finds the bees' ideas better than her own, and changes course.

She hopes to continue working with bees, and is already envisaging new ways of doing so. "I would like to work long-distance, using the same equipment that sur-

geons use to guide operations in remote areas. From Canada I could construct things in a hive in another country using this new computer-imaging technique."

Natalie Hodgson, too, is keen on bees. Her bees inhabit no ordinary hive, but a custom-made bee village made up of 20 brightly painted miniature shops and houses including "The Beehive Inn" and "St Ambrose's Church". As well as her apiary in Shropshire, Mrs Hodgson runs a pick-your-own lavender farm - a combination that makes for a distinctly different day out.

In particular, a bee viewing tunnel has proved a magnet for children. "I got the idea in Poland," said Mrs Hodgson. "The Poles are keen beekeepers and at the bee museum I saw a wooden hive made in the form of a life-size peasant woman in national dress. To get at the bees you lifted her skirt up at the back. That, I thought, was a bit rude for Shropshire, but it did inspire me ..."

A bee village may be fine, but what about a bee boat? Bruno Poissonnier and his wife and two children live on their barge in the South of France together with all their bees, plus the equipment for extracting the honey. They are even preparing a cabin for bee-loving B&B guests.

Bruno, who has a degree in philosophy, started keeping bees 15 years ago and now sells honey both wholesale and retail. The boat navigates the Canal des Deux Mers, which runs between Bordeaux and Béziers, giving Bruno's bees the pick of some of the loveliest countryside in France. Not only can Bruno move the boat to wherever the best honey-producing crops are to be found, but his bees receive remuneration (at about £1,000 a go) for pollinating canal-side fields.

Meanwhile, over in the States, bee eccentricity has taken on a new dimension with bee-bearding. The idea is to encourage bees to congregate around your face and neck in the form of a living "beard". This is achieved by taking the queen and either strapping her in a container to your neck or placing her gently in your mouth ... The bees, attracted by the queen's pheromones, will then swarm around her, creating the beard effect. The swarming bees are full of honey so the risk is not as great as it looks, enabling the doyen of this unlikely sport, Dr Norman Gary, a beekeeper who supplies colonies to American film and television companies, to demonstrate this arcane art naked while playing the clarinet.

Aganetha Dyck's Yorkshire Bee Project is on view at the *Camellia House, The Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Bretton Hall, West Bretton, Wakefield, West Yorkshire (01924 830302)* until 26 October.

Natalie Hodgson's bee village and lavender farm is at *Astley Abbots, Bridgnorth, Shropshire (01746 763122)*.

For enquiries about B&B accommodation aboard Bruno Poissonnier's *Bateau Abeille*, write to the *Marie de Vienne, 47230 Vienne, France*, asking them to forward your letter.

The Best-Kept Village competition is upon us again, and once more your correspondent has the ticklish job of judging the Gloucestershire final. For our county this is a year of special significance: similar contests are now held all over England, but it was here that they originated in 1937, when the first Lord Bledisloe presented a cup bearing his name for the village that had done most to improve its environment. Next month the 60th anniversary will be celebrated by a festive lunch, at which the present Lord Bledisloe - grandson of the founder - will preside.

The final judge feels a certain responsibility. Certainly there is an obligation not to offend: one must seek to be constructive. Another key rule is that natural advantages such as fine buildings and glorious scenery should be left out of account: it is evidence of effort that matters.

As usual, most of the hard work has been done before my arrival. Other judges have winnowed 40-odd entrants down to six. I merely have to decide between two in each category: "small" (up to 300 inhabitants), "middle" (300 to 1,000) and "large" (1,000 to 3,000). In the hope that small would be beautiful, I started my tour with Shipton Moyne (population 275), near Maidenbury. Villagers know the bracket within which judges are required to perform, and judges, in turn, may either declare themselves or arrive incognito. Preferring anonymity, I rolled up on a bicycle and was entranced by the horticultural perfection: gardens glowed with flowers and velvet lawns, verges were beautifully mown.

My hackles rose when I came on something white lying in the road. Litter, by



Duff Hart-Davis

A ticklish job: judging the finals of the Best Kept Village in Gloucestershire

George! But oo - it was a crisp, new envelope, evidently containing an invitation card, which someone must have dropped on a delivery round. As I approached the churchyard, I described a man loitering - with, I immediately suspected, intent to spot and heard the Bledisloe Cup adjudicator. Wheo the fellow stepped up and asked if I were lost, my suspicion was intensified, so I airily said, "No, thanks, I'm fine. Just going to look at the church."

The graveyard was delightful, giving on to open grass fields. But the jewel of the hamlet was Post Office Corner, with its immaculately mown green, its riot of flowers, and its good red telephone box, polished inside and out, and cool in the shade of a chestnut tree.

How to compare such a paragon with its only rival, Staunton (pop 297), way off to the west to the Forest of Dean? Where Shipton Moyne is flat, Staunton perches on steep slopes, and has wonderful views of wooded hills all round. It also has more natural curiosities: an ancient animal pound, areas

of rough common ground, and a huge rock which in profile shows exactly why it is known as the Frog's Mouth.

These God-given advantages should be disregarded, I know. Yet it is clear that the villagers make exceptional efforts to look after their heritage. How to weigh their achievement against that of their rival 50 miles to the east?

In the "middle" category, the two finalists are curiously similar. Bledington (pop 440), near Chipping Norton, and Wiltsey (pop 650), close to Broadway. Both have a pleasantly relaxed air, with broad open spaces and no sense of crowding. Again, I found it hard to decide between two communities which obviously strive to keep standards high.

As for the big boys - Lechlade (2,500) and Bourton-on-the-Water (3,000) - both have been heavily infiltrated by the demon tourist. In each, water is a leading attraction - the strapping Thames and its marina at Lechlade, the infant Windrush running straight through the green at Bourton. The first place is still afloat, the second all but swamped by the weight of visitors.

In both, litter is a pernicious problem: the faster you pick it up, the faster they drop it. The judge has to raise his gaze above burger boxes and exploded bags of fish and chips, concentrating instead on features such as the fine new village hall at Lechlade, and the tremendous blaze of flowers all through Bourton's centre. But again, it is invidious to pronounce one better than the other.

It is easy enough for me to write "watch this space". But before I put anything more into it, I have to sort out the multiple impressions of excellence churning around in my head.

The Highlands' hidden treasure

Weekend walk: Hamish Scott takes a high road through land steeped in ancient myth

Ever on the map, the Silver Walk appears romantic. Starting at a ruined castle in the western Highlands, the evocative named footpath trails along the walled shoreline of Loch Moidart to link up with a mountain path through crags and cliffs that face the distant Hebrides. The four-mile circuit takes in a deserted village and a "loch of blood" that was the site of a clan battle. According to some local tales, the path may even lead the walker to a cache of buried treasure.

We arrived at Castle Tioram on a perfect summer's morning. The old Clanranald stronghold stood reflected in the mirror surface of the sheltered sea loch. Golden seaweed glistened on the shores of wooded islands; bare mountains framed the far horizon. The castle, we decided, should be our destination rather than our starting-point, so we walked on past the sandbar leading to its entrance, and at the far end of the beach we climbed a narrow path that wound its way precariously above the shore through tangled trees and tumbled rocks.

When the path was being cut, a century ago, Elizabethan coins were discovered in a crevice. Hence the name Silver Walk. But there's a darker aspect to the tale: of a theft from Tioram's coffers, and of a serving girl suspected of the crime tied by her long hair to seaweed on a rock that can be seen below the path, the Rock of James's Daughter. Some say that only a small fraction of the loot was found... Distracted by the possibility of finding coins in an intriguing cavity beneath a fallen tree, I almost stepped out into empty space 50ft above the loch. Rhododendrons, I discovered, have surprisingly strong branches.

We stopped to rest beside a burn as the walk descended to the water's edge, then, at a little cairn, we headed inland up a rougher path that climbed into the hills. On a lonely plateau high above the loch we found the broken walls of old stone cottages and byres. The village's entire population was forcibly evicted and transported to Australia in the 1840s, when Clan-

ranald's vast estates were sold and a better price could be obtained for land that had been "cleared" of penniless inhabitants. Rummaging among the tumbled stones and bracken, we found, not silver coins, but the rusty fragments of a cooking-pot.

The path continued climbing up behind the village to a ridge that overlooked an awe-inspiring wilderness of crags and hill lochs. A pair of eagles circled in the cloudless sky, and waterlilies floated on the placid surface of Lochan na Fola, "the little loch of blood". This idyllic spot was once the site of a ferocious brawl between Frasers and Macdonalds, occasioned by some social gaffe committed at a banquet in the castle.

We forked right by the lochside, climbing through a gully to another small hill loch perched on the very summit of the pass. Sitting on a dam, the relic of an old experiment in hydroelectricity, we sopped our feet in ice-cold water under the hot sun. Far below us lay Loch Moidart with its archipelago of islands, while the larger isles of Muck and Eigg floated on the blue horizon. A steep but easy path beside a stream took us back down to the road along the shore.



The tide was in, leaving only a thin strip of sand connecting Castle Tioram to the mainland, and we were the only visitors. Relishing such atmospheric solitude, we explored the roofless halls and kitchens, peered into the dungeon and discovered a medieval lavatory strategically positioned just above the entrance gate, a system of defence that might strike a sympathetic chord with modern eco-warriors.

But Castle Tioram's future lies in the balance: it is currently for sale, priced at just £100,000. The present chieftain of Clanranald is co-ordinating a campaign to preserve it for the local community rather than letting it slip into private hands and be redeveloped - in which case the Highlands might lose a ruin of magical enchantment.

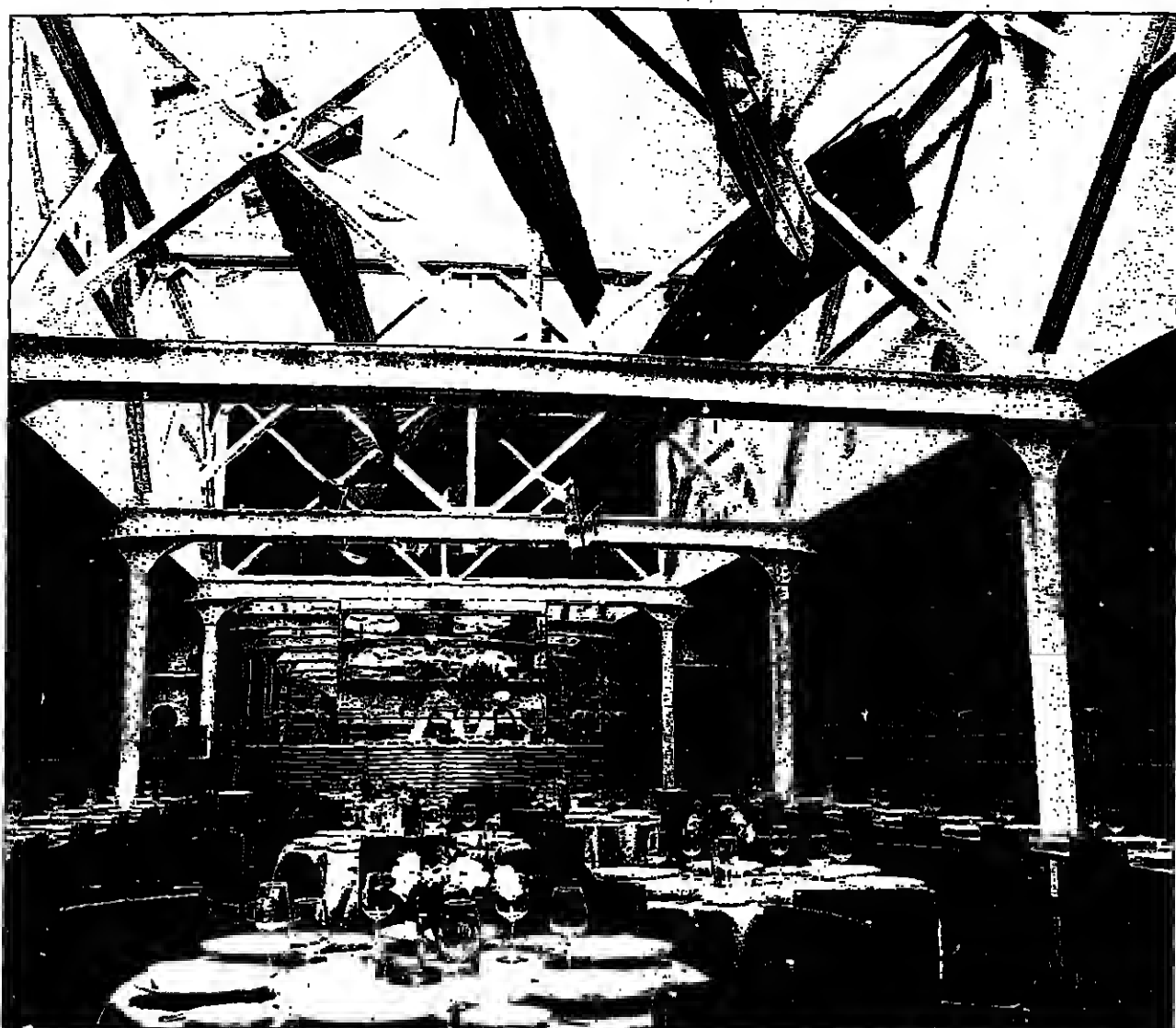
A good pub lunch can be hard to find in the west Highlands, where prepacked breaded haddock all too often masquerades as a local speciality. On the road back to Lochailort we were fortunate to find the Glenisig Inn, where we ate freshly landed prawns that the landlord had "diverged" from their route to Barcelona. The old inn has had a chequered past - torched after the disastrous '45 uprising, closed down in the 19th century for operating an illicit whisky still and, until a road was built just 30 years ago, accessible only from the sea. The history of Scotland, as we were discovering, is not learnt from books so much as from walks and bar-room tales.

Directions
 • Castle Tioram lies off the A861 between Lochailort and Acharacle.
 • Turn right off of car-park and follow shore to end of beach. Climb steep path, continuing along shore for one and a half miles.
 • At small cairn, turn sharp right up hill. Follow path through deserted village and over crest of hill to loch.
 • Fork right at intersection above shore of loch.
 • Climb pass to hill-loch and follow path downhill. Turn right along road to return to castle.

Ordnance Survey Pathfinder map 275

all consuming

The deli of an architect



Conran style: his shops already include small shops selling spices, bread and luxurious olive oil

It sells sofas, lamps and rugs ... now Janet Knight goes shopping at Conran stores for food



Harvey Nicks: opened the door to making food funky

These days, if you want to buy the freshest pasta, the most exotic breads and the finest extra-virgin olive oil to drizzle over your rocket salad, you don't go to the supermarket.

No, silly, you pop to the nearest furniture or department store. Well that's how it seems, as yet another trendy shop gets ready to launch a range of groceries. This weekend, Habitat stores throughout Britain and Europe will start selling own-brand foods: pesto sauce, wild Italian mushrooms, balsamic vinegar, sushi.

And to prove that Habitat is not just setting itself up as a fashionable delicatessen, these foods will sit alongside more basic fare such as tomato ketchup, tea, coffee, and chocolate biscuits. The chain, formerly owned by Terence Conran (we'll come to him in a minute) and now run by the Swedish company Stenham Ingka, thought it was high time we bought our kitchenware and food under the same roof.

The idea is that we'll want to try out our shiny new cooking utensils with some delicious Habitat groceries: "We think this food range establishes us as a one-stop shopping emporium," says a Habitat spokeswoman. "We're selling essential products for modern living."

As you would expect, the packaging is simple yet stylish. There's no uniform colour scheme, but gold-topped glass bottles and silver and

cellophane packets line the chrome shelves. However, while the look is minimalist the prices aren't. Although you can pick up tomato purée for 45p, a five-litre tin of olive oil will set you back £25. According to Kevin Gould, 37, who designed the range and supplies many of the products, it's money well spent.

"When Habitat approached me I said, 'You need to do this properly', so everything is as unmanufactured and unpackaged as possible, without looking like health food. It's not worthy but it's tasty," he explains.

He runs the Realfood Store and Joy, in London, and prides himself on selling only the finest foods, with no added colouring or flavourings. "The great thing about us is that I know exactly where our products come from and the name of the person who makes it," enthuses Kevin. "For example, every week I have buffalo mozzarella flown in from a little town in Italy, and I even know the name of the person who drives it in their van to the airport."

"I think our customers appreciate that knowledge, because it makes the whole experience more intimate," he says.

Since opening his business six years ago, he has become a much-sought-after caterer, taking orders from the opera singer Luciano Pavarotti, the fashion designer Issey Miyake, and the fashion chain Jigsaw, as well as acting

as a consultant to Marks & Spencer. Born out of a limited Christmas selection, the Habitat range now takes in 120 core lines, and is set to expand even further, says Kevin. He believes other stores will follow their lead, but takes his hat off to Harvey Nichols, which launched its hugely successful Foodmarket in 1992.

"Harvey Nichols opened the door to making food funky and aspirational, and it's become a growing trend."

But the real pioneer of fashionable furniture and food was Conran. He started it all with his riverside Gastronomie at Butlers Wharf a year earlier. His site incorporates four restaurants, including the waterfront Pont de la Tour, an oil and spice shop, a wine merchant's, a bakery and a food store. So those diners who wanted to go home and re-create the dishes they'd just eaten, could pick up the necessary ingredients next door.

Mesmerised by the food markets of France and Italy, Conran realised his dream earlier this year with the launch of Bluebird, the ultimate one-stop shop. It's based on the trendy King's Road, in the converted grade II-listed Bluebird Garage, just down the road from Habitat and Heals. It has a bustling and colourful outdoor fruit and vegetable market, a large food market, a wine merchant's, a flower market, a kitchen shop, a bakery, a pâtisserie, a rest-

aurant, a café, a bar and a private dining-club. Conran explains the inspiration behind his concept by launching into a eulogy of European food markets: "The stalls are packed high with wonderful misshapen tomatoes, purple aubergines, sweet ripe melons, aromatic herbs and an abundance of fresh, locally grown produce."

"Such markets are a feast for all the senses: eyes dazzled by the variety and generosity; ears alive with the hubbub of activity; hands busy rummaging through crates to find the sweetest, ripest fruit and vegetables; the nose seduced by the mingling aromas of fresh fish, juicy fruit and local herbs; the mouth teased by expectations of such delicious food tastes..."

Judging by the number of people that like to be designer-fed and have their homes filled with designer furniture, this shopping combination is the way ahead.

After all, it makes life easier if you can get all you want under one roof. It just remains to be seen which stores will be tempted to go down the same path. Certainly, the line between department stores and supermarkets has already been blurred. You only have to look at Sainsbury's and Tesco to see how they're turning into well, department stores.

Many already sell kitchen utensils, books and records, and presumably it won't be long before they start to sell furniture.

Under the counter with Lindsay Calder

I think these sultry nights are doing my head in. That, and the cat waking me up at 2am with a blade of grass stuck up her nose. So, off to the emergency vet, and £74 later she was fine. I wasn't. Every night I have a weirder and weirder dream. Last week I dreamt that I had a sore throat, so I went to the doctor, and he prescribed cigarettes. But because they were prescription, they cost £55 a packet. So I said to him, "Sod that, I'll buy them over the counter" - but they only had blackcurrant flavoured ones. "No, no," I was saying, "I want Silk Cut, Lucky Strike..." Then I woke up. I don't even smoke.

Now I keep waking up at 2am, clapping my throat, scowling at the cat, and fumbling for the Evian. The books I am reading are not exactly soporific - *Transposing* and *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus*. So after yet another palpitating dream, I think: TV - there will be a nice unscripted black and white movie on - the kind with women in hats, who talk with clipped accents and get married after the first kiss. But not quite. Instead, I surf into *The Sex Show* on Live TV. Don't get excited - this must be the most unexciting viewing on earth - even Niles and Frasier Crane are racist. A hazy blonde with a regional accent promises "this is the show that will keep you up all night". I don't think so, sweetie.

First off is *Pleasure Dome*, a sort of QVC à la Anne Summers. The first item up for grabs is a pink "gelo-vibrator", which slapper B enthuses about, while slapper A tries to rub it seductively up and down her leg, but it keeps sticking to her skin and bending in the middle, like some sort of jelly horror-billy. Next up is a "love egg" for the woman in your life. Slapper B swears by hers, because you can just pop it in and enjoy it at the bus stop, in the supermarket, or at work. Can you imagine: "Take a letter, Miss Jones, and by the way, what's that strange vibrating noise - have you left your

electric tooth brush in your pocket?" There are several other moulded plastic items in varying degrees of rigidity, the sales patter going along the lines of "nice colour, and 'ooh, almost as good as the real thing". At least it isn't QVC, or they would have the tape measure out. But maybe the length of the "gelo-vibrator" is more important than the length of a solid gold money-back guaranteed collectable chair.

Now it's competition time. Matt is an ex-public school IT consultant, who has actually knowingly applied to be a contestant on the show. He has turned up in his suit and tie, and must feel mighty over-dressed, compared all the g-strings, buttocks and breasts wobbling around him. His competitive nature shines through, as he joins in the first game, "Basket-bra". In true gladiator style, the contestants are pitched against two girls, in this case "page three lovelies", Tracey and Mandy. Topless Tracey dons a basket ball basket, instead of a bra, and good old Matt attempts to get as many balls in there as he can, while Tracey jumps up and down to avoid them. You can almost imagine Ulrika doing this in a *Shooting Stars* challenge. In the end, Matt is triumphant, as Tracey couldn't quite juggle enough to stay out of the way of his balls.

Next is "Suss the susses" competition: "take a long look at Lindsay's lovely legs", and remember what her suspenders look like. There is a multiple choice of two answers: black or white... By the time *Private Dancer* - "Vote for the babe you want to bear all" - comes on, I'm half asleep. The private dancer is a completely flat-chested "lovely", gyrating in an andram manner in the middle of the floor. I'm feeling very, very sleepy.

The Sex Show, Live TV, Saturdays, 11.30pm-5am. You too can play *Basket-bra*: to register on the contestant hotline dial 0891 700 183

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Blandwagon



Mazda gets very cross when you describe its products as bland. And it's true that there are some very un-bland Mazdas, the MX-5 sports car and the shapely Xedos 6 saloon being the most obvious. But anything with a 626 badge, which means Mondeo-sized, has for the last decade or so been as visually unmemorable as a car could be. There are few cars that an expert can't immediately identify on the road, but a 626 is often one of them. And the new one doesn't change a thing.

In some ways, it's worse. The five-door hatchback version of the outgoing model did manage one interesting styling feature, a rear aerofoil whose shape smoothly moved into becoming the rear window surround - it looked like part of the design instead of a status-enhancing addendum. But guess what? It's gone, replaced by the most obvious, most unoriginal of tacked-on rear wings, to make an already fussy rear end even untidier.

From the side, the new car mimics the tensionless hollowness of the old one, but the rising waistline, which gave its predecessor a semblance of visual motion, has vanished. But at least there's a Mazda-identifying front grille, so we may know a 626 when it comes towards us.

ROAD TEST Mazda 626

by John Simister

because trends have moved on in the meantime. Mazda is now controlled by Ford, which is making some highly adventurous designs (the Ka, the Puma, the new Fiesta). It turns in on itself and looks back. Result: new cars that look as dull as the old ones, created on the basis that if people bought the old dullards, they'll surely buy the new ones, too.

R626 NEW

MAZDA 626 2.0 GSI

SPECIFICATIONS

Price (on the road): £16,910. Engine: 1,991cc, four cylinders, 16 valves, 136bhp

at 5,800rpm. Five-speed gearbox, front-wheel drive.

Performance: top speed 130mph, 0-60 in 9.4secs. Fuel consumption: 30-35mpg

RIVALS

Citroën Xantia 2.0i SX, £16,335. As distinctive as the Mazda is not.

Hydropneumatic suspension gives a smooth ride, interior is roomy, brakes are over-sensitive.

Fiat Tempra 2.0 GLX, £16,191. Good looks and ample equipment, as well as a powerful 147bhp five-cylinder engine with an intriguing sound. Basically a four-door Bravo, but bigger.

Ford Mondeo 2.0 GLX, £16,285. The ubiquitous reproducible, but lively, and surprising fun to drive. Interior is well designed, and today's Mondeos are quiet.

Peugeot 406 2.0 GLX, £16,445. Sleek looks, the best handling and ride comfort in the class, lots of equipment; but the engine's performance feels disappointing.

Renault Laguna 2.0 RXE, £16,155. Shadows the Peugeot for handling ability and ride comfort, looks good, is well made and equipped, but lacks pace.

New engines are imminent.

Volkswagen Passat 1.8 SE, £16,484. Virtually an Audi with a VW badge, with the best-wrought cabin in the class and with quality oozing from every crevice. Terrific value for money, though performance is spoilt by snatchy brakes.



Want to get your way through the jam of car sites on the Web? James Ruppert finds a route - and a host of automotive trivia

A cruise along the superhighway

When it comes to cars and the Internet, unless you know your way around you could end up just potting along down some rural B-road and hitting a dead end. However, with the right route map you can hit an M25-sized jam of information, especially as manufacturers take the net more seriously and an international band of auto-anoraks do their utmost to provide you with unimportant, yet fascinating, car-related facts.

Looking for a new car? Why waste time trudging around forecourts, car lots and visiting private sellers when there are thousands of models waiting for you in an on-screen cyber showroom. This has become big business in the United States where dedicated Internet-based traders have each sold more than 20,000 cars a year. A peek at the US Autoweb site shows how developed the system is. It will even e-mail you once a car you want is found, but isn't much use if you want to buy a right-hand drive Ford Escort. On this side of the pond, Motortrak showed some potential. I typed in my requirements for a Jaguar Sovereign and it came up with 18 choices. I wanted more details and was led to a dealer, Lancaster in Sevenoaks, where I could look at a picture of the Jaguar and all the details I needed to know. Then I checked out some of the other Sovereigns, all of which seemed to live at Lancaster's. I soon realised that there are not enough advertisers to make this system work.

I tried looking for the most common Ford Escort 1.6 hatchback. No match was found. Asking for any Escort at all threw up 38 choices, but once again it was just one dealer group with the cars. A site with 150,000 car prices wasn't much help either, failing to value a common-ordinary Escort.

More useful was a comprehensive listing of franchised dealers in every county and town courtesy of Car DealerNet UK which helps buyers to track down new cars. Dealers run their own car sales Web sites, but some, like the Ford outlet Perry's in Milton Keynes, found that updating

it was very time consuming and the response low. This is mainly because, for the majority of car buyers, the net isn't the obvious place to start looking. Clearly the Internet has the potential to change the way we actually buy and sell cars, but not just yet.

By contrast, the traditional print media, in the shape of the *Exchange & Mart* and *Autotrader* titles, have transferred rather well to the screen. Type in the used car of your dreams, enter your budget and your postcode, and, with *Autotrader*, dozens of choices flood the screen. Great. Saves you a trip to the newsagent. However, half the fun of thumbing through the real *Autotrader* magazine is stumbling across a car you wouldn't normally have considered. This is why the links to other car-related Web sites are so diverting.

I found myself looking at pictures of someone's Volkswagen Beetle which was being restored - and, rather worryingly, found it fascinating. Once you are off through the links there is no telling where you will end up. I stopped off at the Cop Car Registry to pore over the National Highway Patrol Reference Guide to discover that if I was ever in Alabama the state troopers drive around in battleship-grey Ford Crown Victorias. There were also useful tips to avoid

getting caught in that state's speed traps. Interested in James Bond's cars? Then there is a site with pictures, plus everything you didn't need to know about the cars, including registration numbers. Motorsport? Then visit Ferrari's grand Prix team, or McLaren. But then just as you are getting sensible, up pops



The Murray Walker Quotes Page compiled by Pete Fenelon and dedicated to the pearls of commentary wisdom from the voice of Formula One. Contributions from around the globe include "With half the race gone, there is half the race still to go". There is one picture of the great man and a reassurance that Murray has seen and enjoyed the site.

Web stuff is everywhere on the Web. Luckily there is sensible and quite useful stuff too. Multi Media Mapping can provide a map of anywhere in the UK, with a street locator and route finder options. Although a free service and a shop window for their skills, they will want your e-mail address for marketing purposes, a minor inconvenience for a very useful on-line resource.

Manufacturers have caught on to the possibilities of the Internet and, compared to the cost of high profile advertising and glossy brochures, cyberspace is a cheap way to get their company message across. Vauxhall has an excellent site, complete with a Traffic Master Information service to spot jams, a used car finder as well as all the usual Vauxhall's in action type shots.

As you would expect, BMW has an accomplished site and managed to locate the whereabouts of 15 M3 coupes that I'll never be able to afford. BMW owners of Rover, have also created an enthusiastic official Mini site which not only tells you all you need to know about the lovely small car, but even lets you design, on screen, your own Mini.

Also plying their trade on the net are car magazines which ought to stick to the shelf. It is difficult to see the point in these, but they could snare new readers with up to date news. Carworld Connect involves three magazines - *Car*, *Performance Car* and *Classic Car* - and has links to other sites and a forum which allows you to chat away with other petrol heads. However, you may find it more stimulating to look at unobtainable foreign publications like *Motor Trend* from America and an exclusively Internet woman motorist site which doesn't patronise.

As a practical car buying tool, the Internet is not yet a sensible option. For automotive trivia lovers, though, there are hundreds of wonderful wasted hours at local-rate call charge waiting to happen. The automotive Internet is hardly a superhighway but the roadworks are definitely under way. In a few years time we could wonder why anyone ever bothered to visit a showroom, or buy a motoring magazine. In the meantime, have fun cruising.

Free maps and route finding: www.multimap.com. Official Mini info: www.mini.co.uk. Ads plus good links: www.autotrader.co.uk. Manufacturer info and traffic updates: www.vauxhall.co.uk. A superior manufacturer's site: www.bmw.co.uk. Used car ads: www.exchangeandmart.co.uk. Schumacher's F1 team: www.shell-ferrari.com. An American car magazine: www.motortrend.com. Insider info on the US Highway Patrol: www.speedtrap.com/speedtrap/copcars. Three car magazines: www.carack.com/car. Murray Walkerisms: www.users.znet.net/~petefracing/walkerisms.html. An American women's Web magazine: www.womanmotorist.com.

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A car's looks now matter most to buyers. Even Toyota has been playing the style game

If cars were bought for commonsense reasons, we'd all be driving Toyota Corollas. But what we drive depends on our prejudices and, just as important, our tastes.

Style sells. Research suggests that, aside from previous experience, it is a car's looks which now matter most to car buyers. Leading the charge to make cars look more beautiful is Pininfarina, the Italian design house responsible for most Ferraris, various Peugeots (including the 205) and the odd failure (the unsightly Rolls-Royce Camargue comes to mind).

I have just driven Pininfarina's latest creation, the Peugeot 406 coupé, and I think it is the most beautiful non-Ferrari I have driven in years. As with all great design, it does not achieve its beauty through gimmickry or mere detailing. It is the overall proportions of its shape which enchant.

Their style, forgetting their own customers, stuck in characterless, plastic cabins. Pininfarina has long made lovely, if pricey, cars. But many mass makers are now following. Audi is one of the best. Its two-year-old A8, crafted from aluminium, is probably the world's most handsome saloon. This is partly because of its stance, and partly from its muscular body: skin stretched tight over the mechanicals. As with the 406

coupé, there is nothing gimmicky about it; it's the shape that counts. The new A6, although more controversial, with its rounded edges and hunched-up tail, is also visually superb. Renault's design boss, Patrick Le Quémener, has long pushed publicly for good and harmonious car design. And he has done much good work, being taken over by Peugeot, it has been neutered. It now makes dull, if dependable, re-bodied Peugeots.

Ford is probably the most improved car maker in Europe, and not just in terms of drive, dynamic appeal and technical initiative. Fords now look special. Some may be ugly (such as the Scorpio) while others are controversial (the Ka). But you now look at a new Ford with admiration rather than pity.

What an extraordinary world - one of dull Citroëns and exciting Fords! Even Toyota has been forced to play the style game. Toyota saloons used to look dull (though they still sold). Toyota was the M&S of motoring. But the new Corolla has a noticeable face, and street presence. It appeals to those high in sense, as well as sensibility.



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525 DMD	2,000	882 JW	3,400	RAP 40X	600	WJUN 9H	1,450
DS 882S	1,200	884 KAS	1,500	RBR 638	1,450	2527 WW	1,200
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Do any of you have your money invested in an index-tracking fund? The chances are you do not. Most private investors still have the great bulk of their savings in unit investment trusts run by so-called active fund managers - those trying to do better than the stock market averages.

Yet it is a racing certainty that this is soon going to change. The growth in so-called passively managed funds has been a notable feature of the past five years, but the bandwagon still has a long way to run, not just for private investors (for whom the technique is particularly well suited) but for institutional investors as well.

This is what Warren Buffett, the great American investor, has said on this subject: "Most investors, both institutional and individual, will find that the best way to own common stocks is through an index fund that charges minimal fees."

Those following this path are sure to beat the net results (after fees and expenses) delivered by

the great majority of investment professionals."

His point is not just that it is notoriously difficult to do better than the market as a whole, year in year out, but that even those investors who are clever enough to find a handful of fund managers who can outperform the index on a consistent basis are likely to find the benefits eroded by high fees and transaction costs.

This is the reason why, on average, four out of five actively managed funds fail to provide their investors with a return that exceeds the return on the market as a whole. Mr Buffett reckons that in the United States, where competition among mutual funds is greater than in this country, the average cost penalty associated with having an actively managed fund is about 1 per cent a year.

This logic is compelling, given that most private investors don't have the time or the skill to pick either the best managers or the best stocks by themselves. (For those who do have the time and the skill it is a different matter.)



Jonathan Davis

Index-tracking funds can provide ordinary people with a reasonable pension

Index-tracking funds are cheaper than actively managed funds by quite a margin, and costs are falling. The emergence of an active futures market in the main stock market indices means it has become possible to construct an index-tracking fund more cheaply and more simply than before.

The argument for index-tracking funds has been given an important boost by the recent Office of Fair Trading report into the provision of private pensions in this country. The OFT argues, sensibly in my view, that the best way most ordinary people can provide themselves with a

reasonable pension is to invest in an index-tracking fund. This should be predominantly invested in equities but, the OFT suggests, it make sense for the percentage of equities in this kind of fund to be reduced over time, so that the risk of the pension's final value being damaged by a sudden market fall as retirement approaches is reduced.

This seems an eminently sensible proposal, to which it is hard to find valid counter-arguments. One of the main drawbacks is that, aside from Virgin Direct, few such pension products are currently available.

As we know from the pensions mis-selling scandal, the pensions that private sector providers have sold have, in many cases, been inappropriate products sold at a ridiculously expensive price.

It's hard not to agree with Paul Klumpes, of the University of Lancaster, one of the contributors to the OFT report, that the commercial incentive for the rest of the industry to make it available is simply not there.

Such a commodity product is not something that is ever going to make huge profits for the provider, although any firm which can grab a reasonable chunk of the market would still have a nice business on its hands. Nor is there much incentive for independent financial advisers to recommend index-tracking funds, when there are bigger commissions to be earned on actively managed funds.

As a general rule, I am no fan of regulated solutions to problems of this kind, but it seems to me that there is a clear case, as Mr Klumpes suggests, for using the regulatory system to encourage

the provision of a "plain vanilla" low-cost index-tracking pension fund product. We all have a vested interest in the country having a well-funded and appropriate level of pension fund provision in place. The cost of providing one through the state is very high, and there is an argument for clearing away any impediments to the introduction of a sensible privately funded system.

One of those impediments, as Mr Klumpes says, is the information barrier. Most people do not know where to go to look for information about an appropriate private pension, and lack the skills to interpret the information even if they could find it. Although there are private sector services which analyse and rate the performance of different fund managers and their products, this information is not widely or cheaply available.

At the same time, there is no uniform set of disclosure rules imposed on the fund management companies. This is one reason why they all seem able to produce figures which

show their performance in a flattering light.

An index-tracking fund with a relatively high equity content is an appropriate investment for someone seeking to provide for their pension. The Law of Unintended Consequences being what it is, it is quite likely that if such products are introduced in this country, they will be introduced at exactly the moment when the stock market takes a dive. If inflation persists, a higher gilt component may be appropriate. But even that is a difficulty which should not obscure the fundamental truth.

There are many good reasons for choosing an active fund manager, and some reason to believe that you can achieve superior performance that way, but for pensions there is no need to chase that extra margin when there is a cheaper and more reliable alternative available. Take it from Mr Buffett (who does know how to achieve superior investment returns), even if you won't take it from me or the OFT.

Glittering image turns dull

Once they were a status symbol. Now everyone is issuing gold credit cards, writes Nic Cicutti

You have just had dinner with the person of your dreams. Coffees were served an hour ago, the bill has just arrived and it is time to leave. You reach for your chequebook only for your partner to place a restraining hand on your arm. "Allow me," she murmurs, slipping her gold credit card deftly on the waiter's tray.

Sounds familiar? It should: the number of gold cards has rocketed in the past four years, up from fewer than 800,000 in 1993 to more than 2.5 million last year. Gold cards are the fastest-growing sector of the market, with average annual growth of 45 per cent a year. By contrast, the growth rate of standard credit cards is relatively small, just 7 per cent.

William Elderkin, an analyst at Datamonitor, a research consultancy which reported this week on the gold card phenomenon, explains: "Competitive pressure in the standard credit card market is more intense than ever. Many bank issuers have lost share as their traditional dominance has been challenged by a variety of new entrants."

Mr Elderkin points out that the share of traditional issues fell from more than 90 per cent in 1990 to about 75 per cent last year.

Many issuers are turning to the less competitive gold card market, whose holders spent an average of £2,369 last year, compared to £1,334 for a standard card.

The result has been an explosion of new cards, with 24 issuers compared to just four a few years ago.

This week, American Express joined the fray with a gold credit card charging 15.9 per cent APR. To sweeten its offer still further, Amex is offering a rate of 12.6 per cent APR for the first six months.

By combining the introductory rate with the higher one applicable for six months, Amex says users could save £220 in interest payments the first year compared to the Barclays Gold Visa card.

Everyone's going for gold

CARD		Fee Pa	INTEREST RATES			Existing Debit Transfer
			p/m %	APR (purchases)	APR (cash)	
American Express	Gold credit	£40	1.24%	15.9%	23.8%	Yes
Au	Gold MCard	Nil	1.0945%	13.90%	13.90%	Yes
Barclays Bank	Gold Visa	£30	1.252%	20.90%	22.80%	Yes
Co-operative Bank	Gold Visa	Nil	1.85%	21.70%	24.18%	Yes
	Gold Visa Plus	£120	0.56%	11.80%	13.70%	Yes
Lloyds Bank	Gold MCard	£40	1.021%	8.90%	20.80%	Yes
Midland Bank	Gold Visa	£35	1.10%	15.30%	17.10%	Yes
Nationwide BS	Gold Visa	£8	1.31%	17.20%	19.10%	Yes
Popular Bank	Gold Visa	£30	1.10%	15.20%	17.10%	No
Royal Bank of Scotland	Gold Visa	£35	1.30%	17.90%	17.90%	Yes
Sainsbury's Bank	Gold Visa	£25	1.20%	16.50%	18.30%	Yes

Savings of £72.80 are achievable even on Midland's Gold Visa card which is, however, cheaper in year two and thereafter. In addition, the card issuer claims its service to customers, including higher purchase protection cover and 24-hour emergency card replacement, can beat the opposition hands down.

Debra Davis, vice president at American Express, says: "Our research shows that gold card users expect a 24-carat service and are not satisfied with paler imitations."

Despite the typical £20,000 minimum earnings limit - unchanged for years - most applicants for gold cards are above that limit. A spokeswoman for the Au card, marketed by Royal Bank of Scotland, says the majority of its clients earn in excess of £29,000 and their current monthly

card spend is £400. National Westminster Bank users' average income is £30,000.

Card users give a variety of reasons for going gold, including status. Ray, who did not wish his full name to be used, says: "I have had an Amex gold charge card since 1979. I was initially attracted to the green card because it had no spending limit, which was handy for foreign travel."

"The gold card was appealing because it offered a £10,000 overdraft at 1 per cent above base rate. Lloyds Bank have considerably eroded that since. And yes, there was an element of status about it, especially when my imprecise boss was refused one."

"The overdraft is handy if you're trying to stagger privatisation issues, but that era is over. I prefer to use a Visa which gives Oxfam a bit of money."

Sheila, another user, says: "I got my Co-op Visa gold card because of its principled position, and because it is free for life. As I pay my bill every month the interest rate is irrelevant."

Until recently, the main attraction of gold credit cards was the lower interest payable than their standard counterparts. For example, Barclays' Gold Visa card charges 20.9 per cent APR on purchases, compared to 22.9 per cent APR with Barclaycard.

Many other gold competitors are significantly cheaper, including Lloyds Bank and Nationwide, both charging 17.2 per cent APR on purchases. Sainsbury's charges just 16.5 per cent.

However, the difference between standard and gold cards has been eroded by the entry into the market of a new breed of low-cost competi-

tors, including Peoples' Bank of Connecticut, charging 14.4 per cent APR on purchases.

As well as the Au card, named after the chemical symbol for gold, Royal Bank of Scotland customers have the option of two other gold cards, including the RBS Gold Visa, which charges 17.9 per cent APR.

An RBS spokeswoman says the differences between them are to do with the fact that Au is designed to appeal to people who do not already have an account with the bank.

In practice it is hard to see why one should go for gold when less precious metals will do just as well. Unless you are a heavily into status. In which case, truly discerning customers may have to look beyond gold and to platinum, titanium or similar metal exotic for the extra kudos.



Nic Cicutti

Independent surveys show you shouldn't always believe what you read in surveys

Wonderful things, surveys are. Every week this section receives scores of pieces of independent research from a variety of financial institutions giving us the low-down on an absolutely unmissable piece of information.

So for instance, this week I learn that 62 per cent of financial decision makers are "very likely" to see an independent financial adviser in the future.

The source of this astonishing news? Well, blow me; it just happens to be a body which promotes independent financial advice.

Elsewhere, I read that IFA Promotion, as the outfit which published this blurb is called, is about to cut its membership fees for the thousands of advisers who pay it to sing their praises. After this latest effort, I'm not surprised.

More shoddy research comes from Abbey National. Its survey claimed this week that 16 million non-interest paying current accounts may be losing their users more than £130m a year.

The bank based this claim on the assumption that each of these 16 million accounts would have a monthly current account balance of £750, on which Abbey National customers might receive £8.37 a year after tax while the others get nothing.

Abbey's survey is flawed. First, the bank admits there are 61 million current accounts in the UK. Many of them must be dormant, with little or nothing in them. The chances are the most likely account to be dormant is the one that pays no interest.

As it happens, I know what I am talking about, for a change, because I have a dormant account - with Abbey National.

THIS week, we publish a piece on what to do about investments that turn out to be "dogs". You will have to make up your own mind about claims that M&G (page 24) is not up to the job.

What is true, however, is that in the past few years, many fund managers have tended to rely on investor inertia rather than their stock-picking skills to retain their clients. The notion that poor performance of one or more funds must be taken as part of an overall investment strategy - "it's called spreading risk, don't you know" - appears to have taken hold.

Make it your mid-summer resolution to talk to a good adviser about all your investments. Be wary of unnecessary recycling. But if a fund has been a dud performer for years and shows no sign of improving, switch to something else.

EARLIER this year we carried out a free financial makeover on Paula Charlton, a graphic artist. Her financial adviser, Roddy Koh, diagnosed problems with several pensions she had been wrongly sold instead of being advised to join her company pension scheme. The providers involved were informed about this.

This week, Paula heard she will receive compensation worth more than £23,000, thanks to *The Independent*. We can't promise such astonishing results every time. But if you want to be considered for a financial health check, write to: Nic Cicutti, Free Financial Makeover, The Independent, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5DL. You must be prepared for your name and picture to appear in the paper. It could be you.

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FIXED RATES					INSTANT ACCESS				
Barclays Bank	5.50% 1 year	£50,000	£10	None	Barclays Bank	Instant Access	Instant	£1	4.25%
HSBC Bank	5.50% 1 year	£50,000	£10	None	HSBC Bank	Instant Access	Instant	£1	4.25%
First Direct	5.50% 1 year	£50,000	£10	None	First Direct	Instant Access	Instant	£1	4.25%
Monzo Bank	5.50% 1 year	£50,000	£10	None	Monzo Bank	Instant Access	Instant	£1	4.25%
Virgin Money	5.50% 1 year	£50,000	£10	None	Virgin Money	Instant Access	Instant	£1	4.25%
VARIABLE RATES					FIXED RATES				
Barclays Bank	5.50% 1 year	£50,000	£10	None	Barclays Bank	Fixed Rate	1 year	£10,000	5.50%
HSBC Bank	5.50% 1 year	£50,000	£10	None	HSBC Bank	Fixed Rate	1 year	£10,000	5.50%
First Direct	5.50% 1 year	£50,000	£10	None	First Direct	Fixed Rate	1 year	£10,000	5.50%
Monzo Bank	5.50% 1 year	£50,000	£10	None	Monzo Bank	Fixed Rate	1 year	£10,000	5.50%
Virgin Money	5.50% 1 year	£50,000	£10	None	Virgin Money	Fixed Rate	1 year	£10,000	5.50%

Coming to a screen near you

Rachel Fixsen goes for a wander through cyberspace

Swindles, child porn and mass murder games are not the only offerings to grace the Internet. If you want to get clued up about how best to manage your money, the expanding computer network is a good place to start.

Many people go blank at the very mention of the Internet, especially those who haven't even got to grips with computers yet. But more and more people have become switched on to the possibilities available to them on the Internet.

Moneyworld, an Internet magazine, says the majority of its users are males between 25 and 44. This web service has been running for two and a half years, and has between 60,000 and 65,000 regular users. Lin Wong, a Moneyworld spokeswoman, says: "People can sit in their office or at home and get all the information they want without having to go to the library."

A lot of people use the web for browsing and research and it's only once they've found what they're looking for that they actually pick up the phone and buy.

Having no computer or modem needn't stop you browsing the web. It is easy and cheap to use a computer at an Internet café, where staff are around to help you. Once you're up and surfing, use one of the many search engines which are offered to see what is around.

To get a quote for almost any type of insurance, try going directly to an insurance company's home page and then access the option you want. For example, on Direct Line's website you can fill in a user-friendly form. The firm says it aims to e-mail you an estimate within 12 working hours.

For a list of UK insurers and their website addresses, try Business Money's index of UK insurance companies.

If you're looking for foreign exchange rates, financial services provider Bloomberg has a page of key currency rates which, though not real-time, are updated frequently.

Moneyworld lists its advertisers and their home pages can easily be accessed from



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*Source: Micropal.

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M&G goes off the boil

Adviser suggests pulling out of these funds, writes Nic Cicutti

Every year, the unit and investment trust industry vacuums up billions of pounds of savers' money. But in many cases, fund managers deliver poor investment returns year after year. Experts are agreed on what should happen next. After a decent interval, in which you give your fund manager a chance to address any problems, you dump your investment in that company.

This, it is being argued, is what should be happening with many funds from M&G, one of the most highly respected fund managers in the industry.

BEST Investment, a City-based firm of analysts, issued a report recommending that investors pull out of nine funds, which include M&G's flagship Recovery fund, its Dividend, Managed Income, High Income, Extra Yield, European & General, Equity Income and Midland & General funds, each of which have between £1.4bn and £300m invested in them.

BEST Investment's argument is that after years of good performance in the 1980s and early 1990s, M&G has gone off the boil. One reason, the analysts argue, is that many of the fund managers who were so successful have left.

More fundamentally, the report argues: "Across the board [M&G] has favoured traditional income stocks, mid-cap stocks and 'value' stocks. However, since the mid-90s, a fundamental shift in the economy has not favoured these areas."

The overwhelming majority of gains in UK stock markets in the past two years has been concentrated within the upper reaches of the FTSE 100 share index.

BEST Investment says that although there have been changes in senior personnel, there seems little sign of any changes in investment emphasis. Even if performance were to improve, the report adds, it might take up to three years to turn the ship round.

Of course, cynics might argue, if all this switching took place BEST Investment would be on to a nice little earner. Yet the company's chairman, John Spiers, says: "For a couple of years, we have advised savers with a heavy concentration of money in M&G funds that this might be the best thing for them to do. Those who have listened to us have done extremely well out of it."

"We rarely come out with a strong view like this. But in the past 12 months M&G's results have been appalling. The fact is that they have become middle of the road in PEPs. It is not good

enough to be with someone because they had a grand reputation."

Vivian Bazalgette, managing director at M&G Investment Management, agrees the long-term bias of his company has tended in favour of smaller and so-called mid-cap companies. This is based on the belief that the right stock selection in that area should lead to significant outperformance of more mature and larger firms in the FTSE 100.

"What we have seen in the past year or two has been unprecedented underperformance," he says. "But it looks as if this reached its apex in July of this year."

Smaller capitalised companies are trading at a 20 per cent discount to the heavily inflated price/earnings ratio of the main market.

"After the experience of the last 10 days, the markets are looking to invest in good value again and small caps are doing very well," Mr Bazalgette says. As a result, Midland & General has grown 4 per cent in value in the past week. Recovery, a giant with more than £1.4bn invested in it, has picked up 2 per cent in the past month.

He adds that at a time when M&G's long-term strategy is being validated by events, it would be lunacy to pull out now.

Albeit with reservations, other leading financial advisers also argue that now is not the time for a complete pull-out of M&G funds.

Amanda Davidson, a partner at Holden Meehan, a London firm of IFAs, argues: "We are not recommending that people invest in M&G other than for their pensions or corporate bonds. We also know that the investment strategy has not been a good one recently, but we are suggesting that investors give them another year before making a final decision."

Tim Cockerill, investment director at Whitechurch Securities, in Bristol, says: "What we are suggesting is that if you have a large chunk of your portfolio invested in M&G, you should pull out of it. But if it were a question of £3,000 out of £20,000 in the Recovery Fund, for instance, it makes sense to keep your money in there."

A defiant Mr Spiers says: "If the argument is in favour of a mid-cap strategy, which I do not necessarily disagree with at present, there are plenty more successful funds operating in that sector, including Fidelity, Invesco, Credit Suisse and Gartmore. Our advice is still to consider pulling out."

GE Financial Assurance is launching a flexible access bond, which offers a variable rate of return of about 5.6 per cent net of basic-rate tax. Call 0181-380 3398.

Wise Speke, the stockbroker and investment adviser, is making a one-off offer to cut set-up charges on its fund management service from 1.5 to 0.5 per cent. Share dealing charges and annual management fees still apply. Call 0171-617 2900.

The AA is launching Freeway, a direct finance package for buyers of new cars, charging 9.9 per cent APR. Call 0800 435882.

Person	Age	Sex	Height	Weight	Build	Complexion	Hair	Eyes	Teeth	Other
1	22	M	5' 6"	150	Medium	Fair	Black	Blue	Good	
2	24	M	5' 8"	160	Medium	Fair	Black	Blue	Good	
3	21	M	5' 6"	140	Medium	Fair	Black	Blue	Good	
4	23	M	5' 7"	155	Medium	Fair	Black	Blue	Good	
5	22	M	5' 6"	150	Medium	Fair	Black	Blue	Good	
6	21	M	5' 5"	145	Medium	Fair	Black	Blue	Good	

TO FIND OUT WHAT'S ON TV, WHERE TO GO AND WHEN, READ THE EYE TODAY

So Dodi's daddy's desire to do Di a favour has made Kelly crumble. Call me hard-hearted, but every time I catch a glimpse of Diddy snivelling because she's been diddled of her diamond supply - it's dead as a dodo, in fact - I just have warm little fantasies about Dodi and Dumdum waltzing round dear David and the Duchess's Parisian palace to musical classics like Captain Pigeon's "Mouldy Old Dough" or Whitney Houston's "N' Di Will Always Love You" and playing the time-honoured French game of *touche-didi*. The only thing that would make the whole thing more priceless would be if he ploughed some of the upcoming contents sale into buying some Arp sculptures and some daubs by Duchamp. Then Di and Dodi could do it among the Dadas.

Serena Mackesy
In my week

Dodi has been fortunate: his double has been arrested and put out of harm's way, while mine is still very much on the loose.

loose. Whoever she is - and I swear I'm going to catch up with her - she is heaping shame on my head and that of my family. Why, only last week, she paid the phone bill, and in July she was seen putting her hand in her pocket to a har. And it really made my stomach churn when my best friend - my best friend, mind - accused me of being seen on the bus.



This is giving me sleepless nights. I don't mind telling you. I haven't invested all this energy in propping up the bar in Tramp, playing with toy cars, having my picture taken leaning over weathergirls and making the most of my season ticket to the Battersea helipad to have some killer himbo come along and do her own washing. My father is beside himself. He's been on the phone threatening to cut me off if I don't get serious. "You don't think," he said, "I made all those sacrifices in your childhood to hear that you've been seen spending your evenings at National Film Theatre triple-bills, do you? You're a disgrace to the family." I heard him chew his cigar down the line and I knew I was in trouble. "But father," I pleaded, "You know I was comforting a divorcee on a jet-ski at St Tropez last Thursday week. I can't have been being turned away from Harrods for carrying a backpack at the same time, can I?"

photographed with George Hamilton by the end of the week, or it's curtains for the eighth yacht."

Of course, a double has its advantages. The presence of mine has got me out of a few hairy scrapes in the past, like the time I was caught red-handed buying baked beans in Tesco, or the awful, awful day that the press caught on to the fact that I had once had a liaison with someone whose looks had not been surgically enhanced. I simply phoned Taki and told him the sorry tale. He gave me top billing. "My dear friend Serena 'Serri' Mackesy," he wrote, "who is as beautiful and cultured as she is wealthy, has been dogged of late by rumours from less knowledgeable so-called diarists. The ageless socialite, with whom I had a long chat at my dear friend Jonathan Aitken's delightful cheese-and-wine buffet on Thursday, told me, between exchanging kisses with the ever-charming Wafic Said and dear friend Elton John..." and hingo. I was off the hook.

Which is why I worry for poor Dodi. Now that his double is in jail, he's going to have to come up with some other excuses when inexplicable slurs surface. It's tricky, because one has to have something that is believable, which is why I've decided to share some excuses which have worked beautifully for me in the past. "It wasn't me. Small grey aliens had heamed me into their spacecraft and planted a robot replacement while they performed fiendish experiments of a sexual nature on my paralysed body." "Mossad did it." "Don't be silly. If it had been me I'd have paid with a brown paper envelope." "I was in the Paris Ritz at the time. You can check with the hotel records." Failing that, he could always spring the double, spirit him away in a Gulf Stream jet and plant him on the Jonikal to pose for photos while he slips off to indulge his secret vice of sitting on a hard-backed chair while reading Proust.

Imperial short measures



Robert Hanks
the week on radio

One thing you may have noticed about all the programmes beamed at us to mark Indian independence is that they have concentrated almost exclusively on India and Pakistan and what Empire and its aftermath have meant to them. There has been almost no mention of what it has meant to Britain - some programmes on the immigrant experience, but nothing that I've heard on the effects for the rest of the population.

Perhaps the omission has been deliberate - this was the sub-continent's party, after all, and it's not as if post-imperial navel-gazing is utterly unheard of at the BBC. But it is partly the problem: in this country, the end of Empire is discussed almost entirely in terms of loss - declining self-esteem, declining economic power, declining political clout. Coupled with that, underneath all the good intentions in the BBC's *Midnight's Legacy* season, there is a current of liberal paternalism: an assumption that Empire is an evil we did to Them.

There's little recognition of the effects of Empire on us.

When Kipling wrote "What should they know of England who only England know?", he was thinking partly of the purely intellectual point that you can't understand something if you don't know what you're comparing it with. But, more importantly, he believed that England's character had been shaped by Empire.

There's little recognition, either, of how much we may have gained from shedding it. As an instance of this, take the one legacy of Empire that we don't seem to be able to get rid of: *Round Britain Quiz* (Radio 4, Mon), recently

returned after a long holiday (Saga, at a guess). Knowledge is power. When people say that, what they usually mean is that it bestows power; but you could also take it as a rough equation - the things we know about and the things that we have power over tend to coincide, and causation works in both directions.

It's been argued, for example, that zoology is a quintessentially imperial subject - in the 19th century it reached its finest flowering in the two largest imperial powers, Britain and Russia, because knowing your way around the fauna of a territory was a way of confirming your claim to it. If you accept that, it's easy to see how, when three-quarters of the map was coloured pink, it must have seemed natural for the patriotic Briton to take all knowledge as his/her province. Hence the cult of general knowledge, of which *RHQ* is one of the odder results.

The programme has been toned down in significant ways. There is only one chairman now (Nick Clarke, slowly settling into the role) and no resident London team, which has

done much to dilute the appalling clubbiness that used to afflict it. The accounts have been diluted, too - still within the bounds of RP, but less assertively from the upper reaches of society: out goes Lord Quinton, in comes Fred Housego. As before, it both appals and delights me, though neither to quite the same pitch.

Maybe it's pure nostalgia that makes me think that; and maybe that's what makes me feel, too, that the standard of question has slipped - not easier, but sloppier. Would the old *RHQ* have expected the theme-word "Lords" to have been prompted by Bobby Gentry and Schubert's "Erlkönig"? (Lords and gentry are, after all, mutually exclusive categories.)

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Lessons in Narcissism



Jasper Rees
the week on television

Those party animals at the BBC seem to have judged that, after spending the weekend with Elvis, we'd probably want some more pelvic-floor exercise to get us through the week. Hence *Classic Albums* (BBC1, Mon) on The Band, a sound introduction to The Artist Formerly Known as Captain Beefheart (BBC2, Tues) and Oasis - Right Here, Right Now (BBC1, Wed). With so many of them about, you could easily get hooked on the rockprog (not to be confused with progrock, an altogether more dangerous drug that turns users into social lepers). But the Oasis film was well placed at the end of the sequence to steer you away from the threat of addiction.

It may well be that in 30 years' time someone will make a rather better film for *Classic Albums* about *Be Here Now* (how about *Oasis - Right Here, Right Now*?). But if so, one of the problems the future film will have to surmount - apart from the holes the Gallaghers will inevitably have burnt into their own memories - will be that the archive footage is going to have to come from this hopelessly crooked hagiography.

It's not only rock stars who use the proximity of video cameras as an essential aid to

self-promotion. Take *Party Monster* (C4, Mon), a film about New York's self-styled "club kids". These pallid impersonations of humanity in the habit of making home videos of their every immoral activity. Picture the scene. "I'm doing cold turkey." "Way to go? Let's film it?"

The programme about them fell gratefully on the fruits of their Narcissian addiction to illustrate the repulsive tale of Michael Avig, a party promoter who murdered a flatmate called Angel and dumped the corpse in the East River.

You'd guess that cohabitees called Michael and Angel would be almost symbolically close, but that seems to have been the problem. Some months before his arrest, Avig told his home-

movie camera that he killed Angel, who had modelled his own high-camp dress style on that of his murderer because he was "one of those copycats". That dress sense, said to follow "some kind of perverted sex clown aesthetic", imparted a fairly baggy meaning to the word "sense". The murder, however, ineptly a very precise new definition of "copycat killing", the copycat uniquely being the victim rather than the culprit. Death seems quite a steep price to pay for the venial sin of plagiarism, and sets alarming precedents for those who dabble in it. In future, the Gallagher brothers might like to tighten their security arrangements when mingling with certain members of Status Quo.

Party Monster was one of those quite rare programmes that brings you round to capital punishment. Avig's career began sedately enough in the late 1980s. He held disco parties to which revellers were encouraged to do only mildly illegal acts, like strip, and waggle their protrusions. Things raced out towards left field from there: there were club nights where you had to come as a corpse; someone worked up a party piece performing squirty champagne enemas; and Avig enjoyed himself handing round his

own urine in free cans, compliments of the house. Cheers.

One of Avig's coterie, known as James St James, should have been called Stephen St Stephen, because he was always chained up in a loincloth and getting stoned. He is now in Hollywood, writing a book - *The Gospel According to St James*, perhaps. Like everyone else in the film, he sounded as if he had sinusitis, and there's only one way you can do that without actually getting sinusitis.

Dick Emery: *A Life on the Box* (BBC1, Wed) was one of those attempts to lift the honnet on a dead comedian and work out what made his engine purr. Most of the probing, as it is on these occasions, was done by white-haired old pros called Barry. Analysis was almost as scarce as is in the Oasis film, although, reading the invisible small print between the lines, you suspect that Emery was not liked.

"Privately insecure, publicly aggressive," said one Barry in code. Unscrambled, that says, "I hated him."

Depressingly, they'll give the same treatment to Harry Enfield *et al* one distant August, because today's popular culture is the day after tomorrow's lazy schedule-filling stroll round the archives dressed up as a PhD.

Jennifer Rodger

DAMIEN HURTS...and his painfully creative struggle

Kerker



Whatever happened to... Old Age

Age Rage
At 117 years old, Marie-Louise Febronie was this week named as the oldest person in the world. But it seems old age isn't for everyone. "Never trust anyone over 30," they used to say back in the Sixties, and Lord Tubbitt complained recently of a "cult of ageism" in Britain, (casting his green eyes over Hague and Blair no doubt). He is supported by the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England's warning that ageism "is a

big-scale economic problem".

Forever Young
According to *Tatler*, simply take a credit card, an irresponsible attitude, and a responsive bank balance, and a woman can bypass middle age. In our culture, Peter Pan fantasies abound: this week alone saw the Rolling Stones making a concerted effort to fend off retirement with another tour, a 15-year-old's pregnancy by an 11-year-old, and a 10-

year-old competing against adults in a chess competition. Even the Queen mucks about on the Internet for the cameras. When the Society Against Ageism replaces their chairman because he is too old, it is enough to make you wonder how long this can go on.

Facts of Life
This country does not recognise age as part of the Equal Opportunities legislation. Perhaps that's why *Tatler*

feels the need to suggest, "there's HRI, IVF and moisturiser; there's roller-blading, Pilates and nip-and-tuck". But, to inject some realism, by 2000 every third person in the job market will be over 40, and by 2034 the number of people over the current state retirement ages will increase by more than half. The Government has responded to these statistics by introducing plans to equalise state retirement for men and women at 65, so that the

workers-to-dependents ratio is not so disastrously unbalanced.

Age Before...
The Employers Forum on Age (EFA) now enjoys the support of more than 70 high-street stores, who between them employ 1.3million people. Their attitude towards growing old is more positive: older workers tend to be loyal. This means lower absenteeism, and their presence can enhance a company's reputation. Now there is

a Bill going through Parliament making it illegal for job advertisements to mention age restrictions.

A spokesperson for Age Concern says: "Old age is seen as an illness by our youth-obsessed society, yet older people make an invaluable contribution to all aspects of society. Many will testify that their later years are the most fulfilling of their life. One thing is certain: everybody gets old."

Jennifer Rodger

WEATHER

The British Isles

General Summary and Outlook

England and Wales will have a cloudy day with any brightness confined to the south-east and East Anglia. Outbreaks of rain are expected in northern and western areas this morning, but this afternoon any remaining rain will become confined to the hills. Southern Scotland and Northern Ireland will also have some rain this morning, but it should be drier by afternoon. Meanwhile, northern Scotland may have the odd shower but there will be a good deal of dry weather, and the far north will see some sunny spells.

Tomorrow, southern and eastern Scotland will start cloudy with a little rain in places, but brighter weather already across north-west Scotland and Northern Ireland will extend to most places during the day with some sunny spells expected as well.

England and Wales will start cloudy with light rain here and there, however, all but East Anglia and the south-east should brighten up with some sunshine developing.

Temperature		Wind		Rain	
Max	Min	Dir	Spd	mm	mm
London	18	14	15	15	15
Belfast	16	12	10	10	10
Cardiff	17	13	12	12	12
Edinburgh	15	11	10	10	10
Glasgow	16	12	11	11	11
Manchester	17	13	12	12	12
Newcastle	18	14	13	13	13
Nottingham	17	13	12	12	12
Sheffield	16	12	11	11	11
Southampton	19	15	14	14	14
Stirling	14	10	9	9	9
Swansea	18	14	13	13	13
Wolverhampton	17	13	12	12	12
York	16	12	11	11	11

Air Quality		High Tides	
City	Index	Location	Time
London	Good	London	6.02
Belfast	Good	Belfast	6.12
Cardiff	Good	Cardiff	6.15
Edinburgh	Good	Edinburgh	6.18
Glasgow	Good	Glasgow	6.20
Manchester	Good	Manchester	6.22
Newcastle	Good	Newcastle	6.24
Nottingham	Good	Nottingham	6.26
Sheffield	Good	Sheffield	6.28
Southampton	Good	Southampton	6.30
Stirling	Good	Stirling	6.32
Swansea	Good	Swansea	6.34
Wolverhampton	Good	Wolverhampton	6.36
York	Good	York	6.38

Sun and Moon	
Event	Time
Sun rises	05:58
Sun sets	19:56
Moon rises	10:45
Moon sets	12:23

New Moon 1 Sept	
City	Time
London	00:02
Belfast	00:04
Cardiff	00:06
Edinburgh	00:08
Glasgow	00:10
Manchester	00:12
Newcastle	00:14
Nottingham	00:16
Sheffield	00:18
Southampton	00:20
Stirling	00:22
Swansea	00:24
Wolverhampton	00:26
York	00:28

Europe and The World

London, Richmond Park between Kingston Gate and Ham Gate closed for roadworks until Oct 31.

London, A306 Hammersmith Bridge. Closed until January 1998.

Surrey, M25 J8-10. Lane closures both ways until further notice.

Staffordshire, A50 Stoke On Trent. Major works at Mer and March 1998.

Leicestershire, M1 J24 and Sleafly Island. Work for the new Derby Southern Bypass.

Greater Manchester, A58 Park Rd. Closed southbound between the A6 and Chichester Way. Diversion via A6 and Bolton Road until Oct 24.

Merseyside, A567 Bootle. Stanley Rd closed northbound until further notice.

Tyne & Wear, A19 Newcastle area. Roadworks at Killingworth.

West Yorks, M1 J47. Major long-term roadworks until Sept 15.

North Yorks, A19 Thorneby-on-Thames. Roadworks.

City of Glasgow, M8 J25. Cycle Tunnel A739 Cardonald Interchange has narrow lanes both ways due to roadworks until Aug 30.

Out and about with AA Roadwatch call 0334 401, for the latest road and traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 50p per minute at all times (ex VAT).

The Sky at Night

Constellation Capheus is high in the sky and well placed for observation during the late evening in the next few weeks. This chart shows its position relative to the overhead point at about 11pm BST this week.

In the stars, as in legend, the Ethiopian king Cepheus is outdone by his ostentatious wife Cassiopeia. But though his constellation may be less conspicuous than the W shape of his Queen, it is nevertheless of celestial interest. The coming few weeks are the best time of year to identify him, as he looks down on us in the late evening from a vantage point almost overhead. Cepheus lends his name to the Cepheid variable stars. Their prototype, Delta Cephei, regularly changes in brightness by three-quarters of a magnitude. Over five days and 9 hours, this giant yellow star breathes in and out. Delta Cephei's kin located in galaxies beyond our own signal important clues to the scale of the universe. Cepheus is also home for the supergiant that Sir John Herschel dubbed "the garnet star", so impressed was he with its deep red colour. More formally known as Mu Cephei, it too is variable.

Jacqueline Mitton

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